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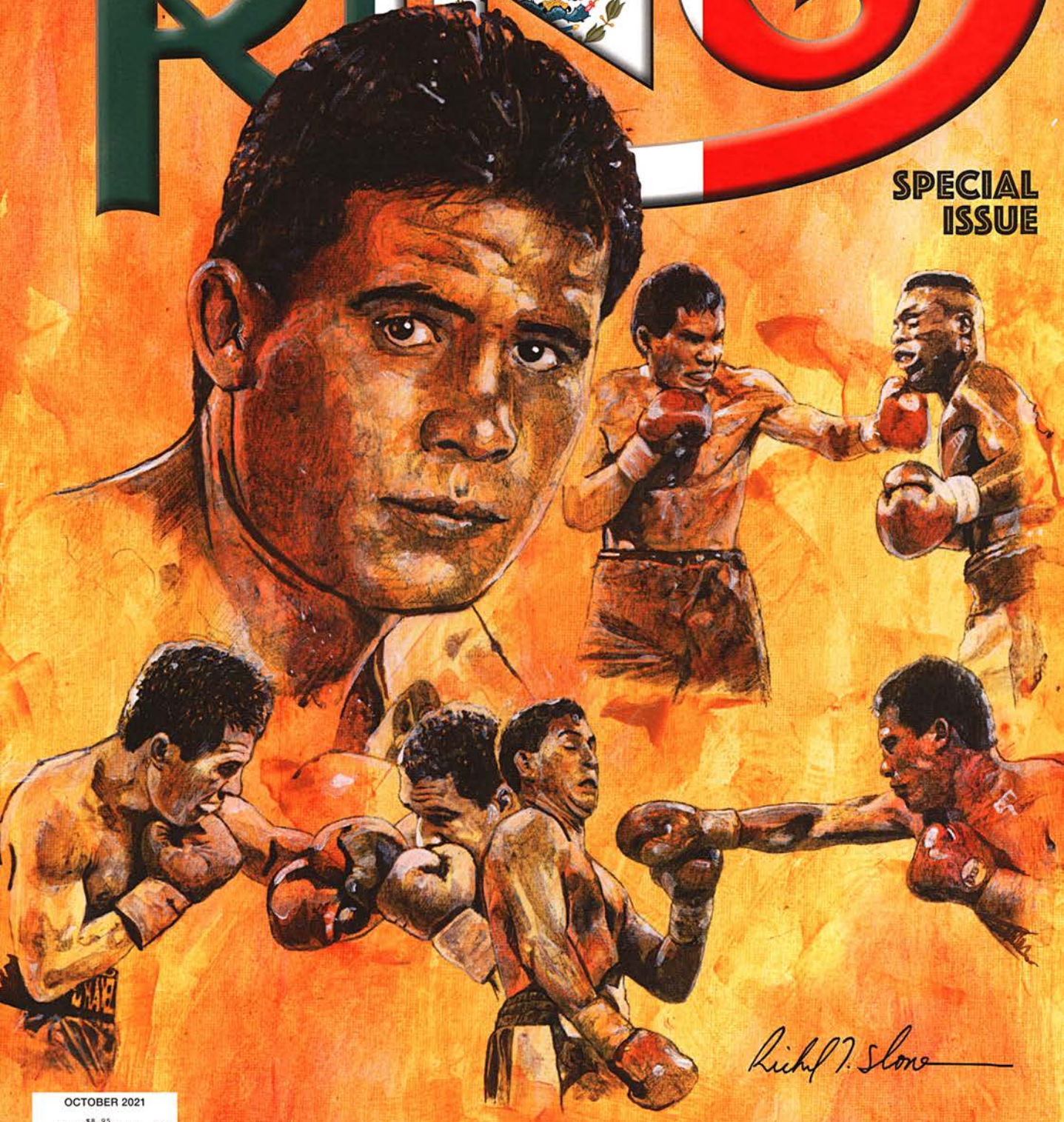
JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ

SPECIAL ISSUE



THE CHAMP IN HIS OWN WORDS / THE GREATEST HITS

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Adorned in his traditional Mexican serape and signature red headband, a prime Chavez was a force of nature.

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SALUTE TO MEXICO'S GREATEST WARRIOR

I remember the Saturday nights Julio Cesar Chavez fought on were like a family holiday. I'm sure it was the same for many, many Mexican families. We watched him in awe dismantle Camacho, Haugen, Taylor, Parisi, etc., and were truly dejected when he lost to Randall. We lived and died with Chavez. My dad used to always say, "Ningun boxeador, aunque volviera a nacer, se compararia a Chavez." Translation: "No fighter, even if he were to have two lives, could ever compare to Chavez." Viva El Leon de Culiacan.

Luis Alvarez

I read extensively about Julio Cesar Chavez in boxing magazines for the best part of three years before I actually saw him fight on TV. ITV in the U.K. showed delayed coverage of his amazing win against the late Edwin Rosario in 1987. From that point, I was hooked on him. He was utterly relentless and seemed to be made of iron. He was impervious to anything Rosario threw at him, and Rosario was in his prime and noted as a puncher.

ITV caught a few of his fights after that, notably his wins over Rodolfo Aguilar and Jose Luis Ramirez. As we moved into the '90s, Sky TV was making a big impact in the world of boxing. Chavez was featured a lot on their ringside program, and I was fortunate enough to see delayed coverage of his amazing come-from-behind win against Meldrick Taylor in 1990 (and I agreed with the stoppage). This was hot on the heels of the Tyson versus Douglas upset, and it's safe to say that fight saw and raised the events of Tokyo.

Between Sky and ITV, I was able to see a lot of Chavez over the ensuing years: his wipeout of Kyung Duk Ahn, the bludgeoning of Roger Mayweather, his savage assault of Greg Haugen and a one-sided beatdown of Andy Holligan. His gift-wrapped draw against the late Pernell Whitaker was shown live on ITV (no pay-per-view), as was his shocking loss to Frankie Randall in Las Vegas (via delayed coverage).

In spite of the six defeats that all occurred in the twilight of his amazing career, Chavez was and remains an icon within world boxing. He features on most all-time-great lists towards the top and is probably the greatest Mexican fighter in the history of the sport. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have seen him in his heyday, and thankfully there is plenty of footage on YouTube of the fights I didn't get to see back in the '80s and '90s.

With all the YouTube "stars" fleecing a living from the sport, I would urge all fans who pay to watch them fight to go onto YouTube and watch a master at work for free.

Saludos, Gran Campeon!

Paul Wickes
Bath, England

I had just refereed the main event in Madison Square Garden – Oscar De La Hoya vs. Jesse James Leija – on December 15, 1995. The Garden had been on a hiatus from boxing for about three-and-a-half years, but it reopened with a lightweight title fight on HBO. Oscar took down Leija in two rounds.

I went upstairs to a private party after the fight, and Joe Frazier, a dear friend I'd known for a long time, was hanging out with Julio Cesar Chavez.

Joe called me over to them, and Julio said to me in English, "You do a good job tonight." I said: "Gracias, gran guerrero."

Smoke said to me "What did you say?" as Julio was laughing and gave me a hug. I let Joe know I said, "Thank you, great warrior."

My son Brett then snapped the photo on this page. It was a wonderful feeling, making them laugh and being there with two of the greatest fighters who ever lived.

Ron Lipton
Hyde Park, New York

★ ★ ★

In your latest issue, you guys speak highly of Canelo Alvarez, as you often do, and rightly so if he achieves his goal of undisputed at 168, although I think Caleb Plant will have a say in that matter. But outside of his longevity, can you explain how or why Canelo is ranked higher than Naoya Inoue on your P4P list? Canelo might be the best at 168 at the moment and he may even be the best at 175. But at 160 and 147, there is clearly an opposition to his P4P throne. Inoue, on the other hand, is unquestioned as the best at every weight class he's fought at, and the power is without a doubt P4P. As a Bud Crawford fan, I understand his rankings at both P4P and 147, considering his inactivity and a lack of a true dancing partner at 147. But The Ring's blunt bias toward Canelo and perceived separation from all the other present-day greats ... puzzles me! I just can't see it!

David lee Pair Jar
Southeast D.C.

Editor's response: And you were so reasonable up until the "blunt bias" part! Look, there were members of our Ratings Panel who agreed with you after Inoue's most recent fight, but the majority sentiment is still that Canelo's resume edges the contest in his favor. Even Inoue himself said this. He did go on to say, however, that he'll make a strong case for No. 1 if he can unify at 118. On that we all agree, so we'll see. And by the way, if you look back at your Ring collection, you'll see that we have a pretty good record of respecting Inoue's greatness when a lot of people still dismissed him as a hype job.

On June 26, we saw the birth of a future HOF'er when Gervonta Davis defeated Mario Barrios in the fashion that he did. In the early rounds, it was evident the height was an issue. When the kid made the adjustment necessary, he took over, stopping Barrios to the body. It doesn't get better than that. The 140-pound division is on notice.

Raymond Williams
Shady Side, Md.

Everyone always talks about the pound-for-pound top 10 list, but I miss when The Ring used to put out its annual top 100 fighters. It was a great snapshot of where the sport was at, featuring the elite champions, solid titleholders and rising prospects who would often be on top in a few years.

Whatever happened to "The Ring 100" (and for that matter, the "State of the Game" issue)? I know that the magazine's length has shortened, but I guarantee that plenty of fans would love for this yearly list to return. It would also be a great way to educate fans on the hierarchy of the sport and for readers to learn about fighters they might otherwise be unfamiliar with.

Nathaniel
Toronto

Editor's response: The reduced page count does make it difficult to accommodate such large features, but reviving "State of the Game" and "The Ring 100" in some form is something that has come up. Thanks for the reminder.

Tris Dixon's *Damage: The Untold* *Story of Brain Trauma in Boxing* is a very important book, one that should be required reading for sanctioning and governing bodies, judges and referees, ringside physicians, promoters, trainers, managers, and prizefighters themselves – in short, anyone connected with the sport of boxing. Members of Congress would also benefit, since they failed to support Sen. John McCain's 2002 efforts to create a Federal Boxing Commission with a national database (medical records, brain scans, MRIs, etc.) to protect the health and safety of boxers. At present, state boxing commissions present a cacophony of standards and regulations. Perhaps now is the time for Washington legislators to reconsider federal oversight of the sport. What better primer than *Damage*? Unless the sport of boxing heeds Dixon's warning, today's boxers will be no healthier than their past counterparts when the final bell tolls. Boxing must confront its own worst problem: how to prevent concussive brain injury. Several proposals have been made in the past to make the sport safer for its participants. Sadly, all have fallen on deaf ears.

Vincent J. Cirillo
North Brunswick, N.J.

I have to say, the story from Ron Borges ("Are You Not Entertained?" August 2021) was spot-on correct. Spectators don't know the underlying factors for why a fighter cannot continue the prizefight for which he is participating in. His coach might see something, he might feel something – it could be a number of reasons. Even the reasons the fighter himself did quit. But until you know, keep your mouths shut!!!!!!!!!!!! A perfect example was, yes, the Gerald McClellan-Nigel Benn fight. My sympathy goes out to McClellan, for he had that fight in hand against a warrior and champion in his own right. That fight also took a lot out of Benn, mentally. We all know that's part of the chance you take when you choose the fight business as your bread and butter, but kudos to you, Ron Borges, on an article well-written.

V. Paul Alley
Casa Grande, Ariz.

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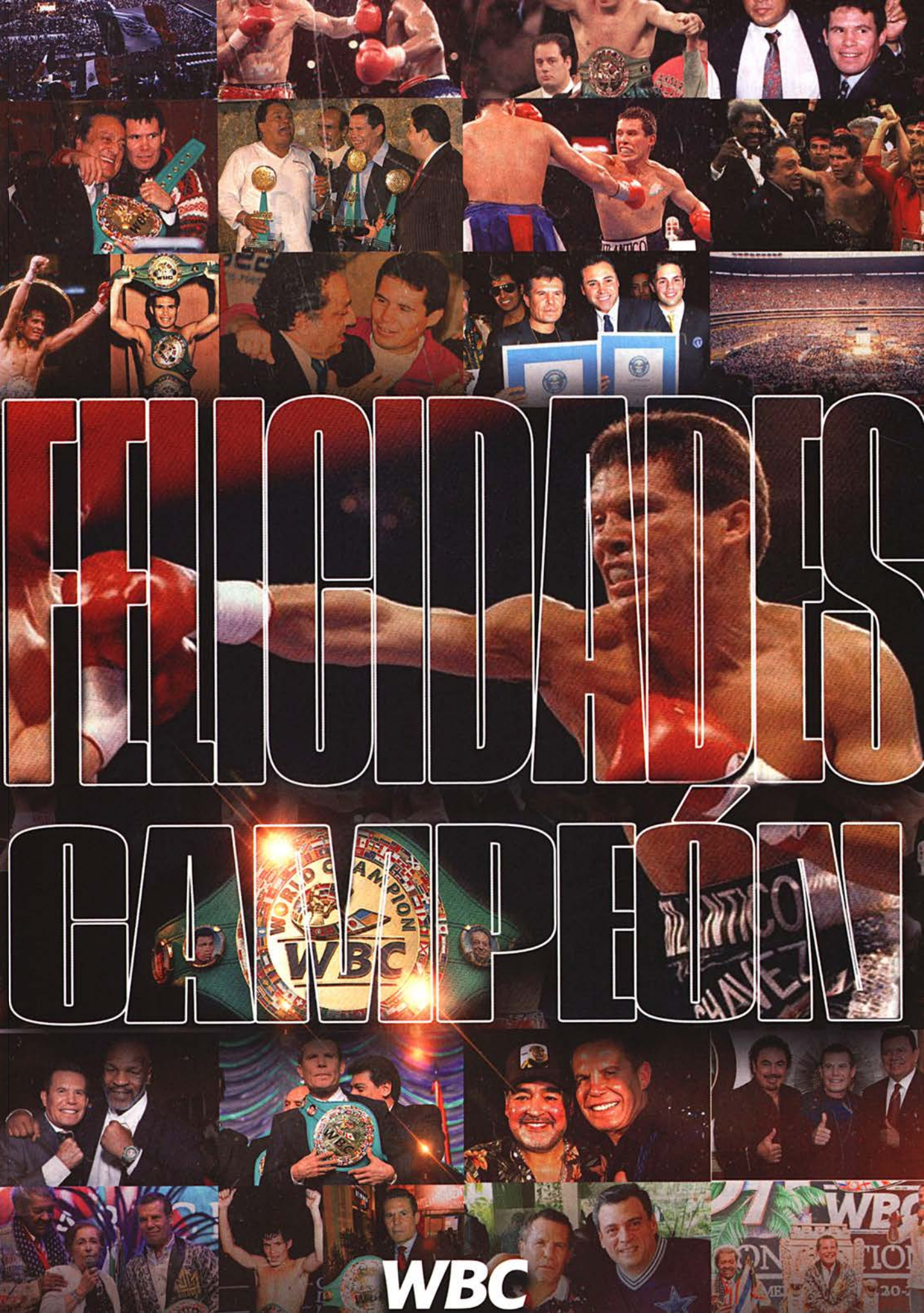
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JC OLIVERA

RINGSIDE BY MAURICIO SULAIMAN

A CHAMPION IN THE RING AND IN LIFE

Chavez goes back almost four decades with the Sulaiman family and the WBC.

Julio Cesar Chavez first visited a boxing gym to watch his brothers train. He was more into soccer and baseball than boxing, but there came a day when he was challenged by a bullying boxer, and it was during their sparring session, I'm told, that he (and the rest of the gym) discovered he was a brave kid with tremendous talent.

Ramon Felix, a legendary trainer from Culiacan, took him under his wing and managed his early boxing career, which unfolded unnoticed by the boxing world. One day, I came home from school to find this shy young kid with a charming smile sitting in our living room and talking to my father along with Mr. Felix. I recall he was wearing a ripped T-shirt and old jeans. He was as poor and humble as you would expect a kid named Julio from the province he came from to be. (He was reportedly born inside of an abandoned train wagon in Ciudad Obregon, Sonora.)

They were there to ask my father, Don Jose Sulaiman, president of the World Boxing Council, to support his climb up the rankings and boxing prominence. Mr. Felix claimed that Julio was going to be a superstar, the next Salvador Sanchez.

My father saw him fight and was convinced Julio was something special. When the WBC 130-pound title was vacated by Hector Camacho, the WBC ordered No. 1 contender Mario Martinez to fight No. 6 contender Julio Cesar Chavez for the title. Martinez was a heavy favorite, but on September 13, 1984, a legend was born.

Here's a story that tells you how innocent Julio was at this time: After he won the WBC 130-pound title, his promoter, Don King, asked him to choose a car as a bonus for his magnificent victory. "Julio, Julio, Julio, get any car you want! It will be my gift to the campeon!" While all of King's other champions would choose Ferraris or Porsches, Julio chose a Chrysler New Yorker because that was the car he saw the most on TV commercials back in Culiacan.

But this humble young man from Mexico would go on to establish himself as his country's greatest champion and the best fighter in the sport, pound-for-pound, while setting all-time records and entertaining the biggest and most loyal fan base in boxing. His career was defined by his relentless attack to the body and his iron chin, which saw him through dramatic fights against the top contenders in three weight classes. Chavez was a world champion for

The Lion of Culiacan with friend and longtime WBC president Jose Sulaiman.

10 years and he remained undefeated for 14 years. He participated in 37 championship fights!

When Chavez fought, it was a national party. Thousands would go out into the streets to celebrate yet another victory. In Mexico City, the Angel of Independence monument would be the public center of celebration for our greatest sports hero.

Every single time that Julio fought in Mexico City, he would end up at my house with his entourage and friends to celebrate his victory. He loves my mom's cooking and always requested specific dishes. The night he defeated Alberto Cortes at Palacio de los Deportes, he told my father he was tired and was going to go rest after the fight. Two hours later, around 1 a.m., he showed up with 50 friends and a mariachi band. My mother and all my siblings had to go out and get enough food, beer and sodas to entertain Julio and his guests, who finally left around 6 a.m. with the champ.

Julio became bigger than boxing, but he remained down-to-earth and friendly and was always willing to take pictures and sign autographs. One of his weaknesses was to be too accessible to his fans. He was happy to accept invitations, not wanting to be seen as arrogant. These invitations in his hometown of Culiacan were common – for baptisms, graduations, weddings and parties. But gradually, these social invitations led to the temptations of alcohol and drugs, which eventually took over his life. During the tail end of his championship reign, Julio would enter an inferno that led him to the darkest times of his life.

In the final stages of his illustrious career, he still sought one last shot at ring glory. He needed to find closure after losing his WBC 140-pound title to Oscar De La Hoya and then drawing with Miguel Angel Gonzalez in a bid to regain it. Julio visited my father late at night, went upstairs to his study and sat there to talk. All of a sudden, while he was begging my father to grant him one last shot, Julio said, "Don Jose, please do this favor to me, on the name of him, who is looking at us right now" while signaling toward his back. There was a photograph of my grandfather on the wall. Julio knelt down and cried on my father's knees, asking for one last opportunity for the title. He got it, a mandatory challenge to then-140-pound champion Kostya Tszyu, who defeated him in six one-sided rounds. Julio was very close to my father. He traveled to a small town, Ciudad Valles, to be with my father when Don Elias, my grandfather, died.

A few years after the Tszyu fight, Julio promised my father that he would enter a rehab center to clean up his life. However, he insisted on doing a "farewell fight" for his fans, which they agreed to do. Julio was the promoter and the WBC helped him in all aspects of the promotion. They thought that a rematch against his archrival, Hector "Macho" Camacho, in Mexico City would be the most interesting fight for the public. So, there they were, Julio and Hector, sitting at the dining room table in my house with my father. Don Jose tried to get them to agree to terms, but the discussion turned so aggressive and offensive that they both got up and started pushing each other. They were so close to getting into a fight right there in my house – no audience, no cameras, just a true, legendary rivalry. Chavez ended up fighting Frankie Randall for the third time in a sensational event at the Plaza de Toros Mexico. It was a successful promotion and it inspired Top Rank to do another "farewell fight" at Staples Center in Los Angeles (vs. Ivan Robinson).

Not long after the Randall and Robinson fights, Julio accepted the hardest challenge of his life – a head-on battle with addiction. It took the efforts of many to get him into rehab facilities, but he finally was able to see the light. Julio has been sober for 12 years. He dedicates his life to helping those in need. His mansion in Culiacan was transformed into a rehabilitation clinic and he has another one in Tijuana. Today he is a successful TV commentator. Everything he does – every broadcast job or paid appearance – is done to support his clinics and to keep saving lives.

Chavez will forever be known as "El Gran Campeon Mexicano," in the ring and in life.

Mauricio Sulaiman is the president of the World Boxing Council. His father, Jose Sulaiman, was the WBC president from 1975 until his death in 2014.

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FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

BY TOM GRAY

In his 140-pound debut, Davis eventually unleashed his full arsenal on the much larger Mario Barrios.

GERVONTA DAVIS

What round is it, Mr. Wolf? It's Round 1. What round is it, Mr. Wolf? It's Round 3. What round is it, Mr. Wolf? It's dinner time!!! Mario Barrios' experience against Gervonta Davis mirrored that of several other "Tank" victims: Everything is going well until you're eaten alive. The instant Davis crashed home with a quick right hook to the temple in Round 8, a very competitive fight turned into a dinner bell for the budding star. Approximately 16,000 fans at the State Farm Arena in Atlanta looked on as Barrios flew several feet across the ring and came to rest flat on his back in a neutral corner. He rose gamely, but the southpaw Davis closed the gap in an instant and a ferocious left to the chin took Barrios off his feet for a second time. Unbeaten in 26 fights, the San Antonio, Texas, native refused to go quietly and did remarkably well to survive the session, but Davis had made his mark and the bout took on an entirely different feel. With just over a minute remaining in Round 11, Davis timed his man on the inside and slotted home a picture-perfect left uppercut to the solar plexus that dropped Barrios to his knees. You can't shake those late in a fight, and although Barrios made it to his feet, he could no longer protect himself when referee Thomas Taylor came to his rescue. The official time was 2:13. Davis was making his debut at 140 pounds against a fighter rated No. 7 by this publication, and there was no downside to the performance. He carried his vaunted power up to junior welterweight and enchanted his fan base with yet another spectacular finish. "I made it tough on myself," Davis said after the fight. "I could have made it easier. I'm the type of fighter that wants to catch you with clean shots. The shots that I was throwing, most of them were missing, but eventually I caught up with him. Floyd Mayweather came to my corner and told me I was down. I knew I was down. He told me, 'Show me that you're great!'" The term "great" is premature, but Davis is certainly heading in the right direction.

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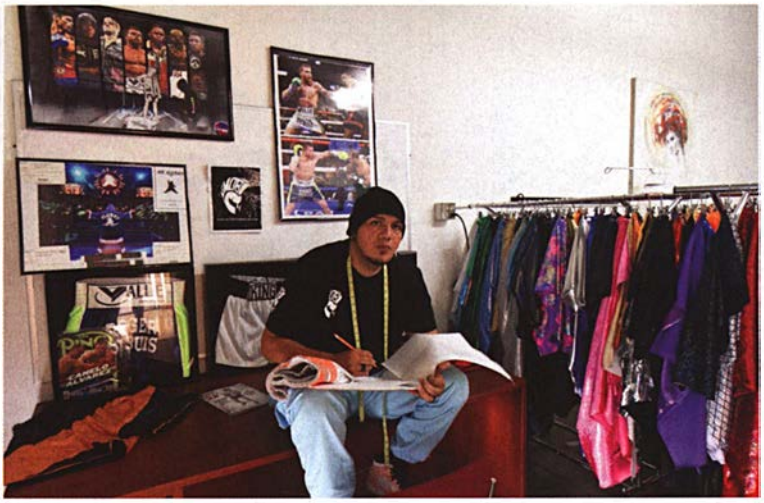

"The brand name 'I Got My Own Back' came around shortly after I overdosed on drugs and alcohol in 2011. I'd gotten into trouble with the police and was looking at time in prison. I felt like I was no good. I felt like I didn't deserve anything. I'd lost everything that was good in my life.

"When I was in the middle of overdosing, that was the first time it came into my head that I hadn't accomplished anything in my life. I was looking back at my life, seeing myself in the mirror… crying… and I asked God for forgiveness. I asked him to let me see my family one last time because they're the ones I'd hurt the most. Suddenly, I was in this dark room and I could hear voices in the distance. My parents had found out where I was, I remember my mom and my brother screaming, and it turns out that when I could see them in the distance, there were two gentlemen working on me to bring me back. I'd died.

"A couple of days later a doctor explained to me that he knew I was an alcoholic. He said that it was now up to me to write a new story going forward; it was up to me to find my own path. I went home, threw out all my pills, all my alcohol, and I explained to my family that I was going to be a new person going forward. All I asked was that they didn't bring up my past, that they didn't judge me, and they were able to do that, because they knew I'd been to a very dark place in my life.

"A week or so passed and I'm sitting in my room drawing T-shirts and boxing shorts. I had to go through a lot of withdrawal symptoms, and I didn't rely on AA meetings or anything; I did it all by myself. I was going crazy because my body wanted pills and this withdrawal went on for months. During that time, I kept distracting my mind by watching boxing on YouTube, I learned about fashion, and I continued to draw pictures of outfits that I would design one day. I told my dad that I was going to start a company and that I was going to call it IGMOB (I got my own back). The idea was to be in control of my life and my destiny. I would never be down on myself or listen to the opinions of others again. The company name was not about me being a fighter and beating people up, but I am a fighter in life. I also became a mentor, I help people today, attend conventions, and I'm a WBC Cares ambassador.

"I've been clean for over 10 years, and I've accomplished everything that I set out to achieve. Design for a movie? I did it. Design for the biggest fighter of my time? I did that when I designed for Canelo Alvarez.

"I fought growing up; I was involved in boxing and mixed martial arts from a young age. Fighting also brought my family together when we watched Oscar De La Hoya, Julio Cesar Chavez, Mike Tyson, and those were some of the most exciting moments of my life. Now, I tell people that it was boxing that saved my life."

Javier Zinzun Jr.

Dedicated to the Zinzun, Paque family 10/10/20

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JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

WATCHING CHAVEZ-TAYLOR I WITH "THE GREATEST"

Many boxing fans consider Julio Cesar Chavez's March 17, 1990, knockout of Meldrick Taylor his most memorable fight. It was particularly memorable for me because I watched it on television in Indonesia sitting on a sofa next to Muhammad Ali.

In 1990, Sony sponsored a week-long series of events in Indonesia and invited Muhammad to Jakarta as a guest of honor. I was researching a biography of Ali and came along for the ride.

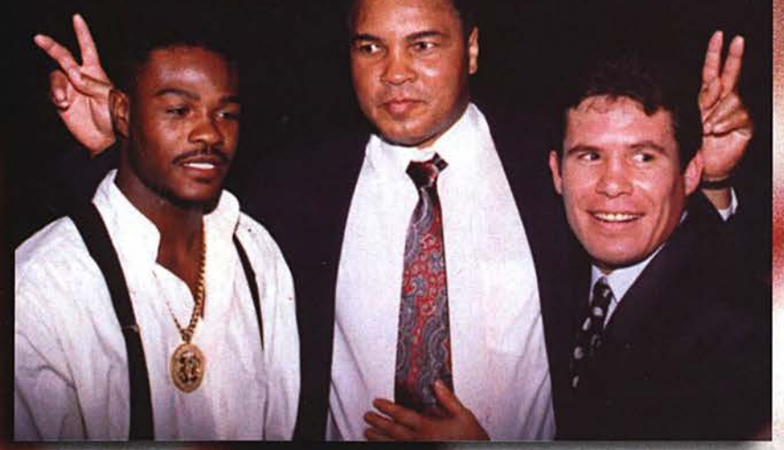
"Super Show '90" featured music and boxing. Kool & The Gang performed in a concert. There was a fight between former heavyweight titleholder Tim Witherspoon and a heavyweight from Kansas named Greg Gorrell. Larry Holmes did double-duty, boxing in an exhibition against James Tillis and singing in the Grand Ballroom of the Sahid Jaya Hotel.

Ali was in good spirits throughout the trip. He'd been to Indonesia once before, in 1973 when he cruised to a 12-round decision over Rudi Lubbers. Recently, his designation as "the greatest heavyweight of all time" had been questioned by those who thought that Mike Tyson might be greater. But on February 11, 1990 – five weeks before Chavez-Taylor I – Buster Douglas had knocked out Tyson in Tokyo.

Earlier, Ali had said about Tyson, "He's predictable, the way he moves his head. He has fast hands, but he's slow on his feet and my hands were faster than his. The way to beat Tyson is with a fast jab, a hard right hand, and if he hits you, you have to be able to take a punch."

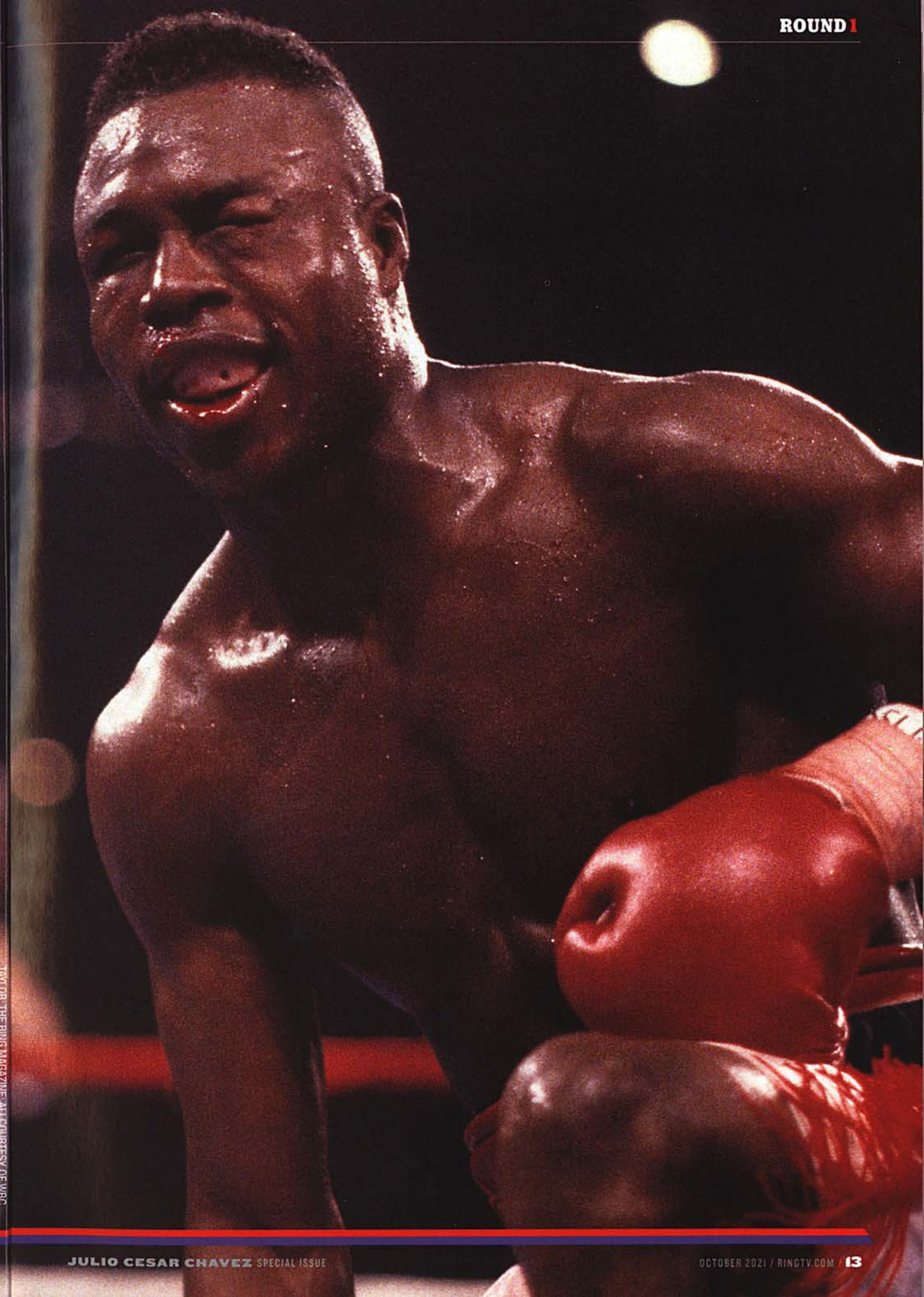
Minutes after Tyson was knocked out in Tokyo, my telephone rang and a voice asked, "What do you think people will say now when someone asks them who was greater, Mike Tyson or me?"

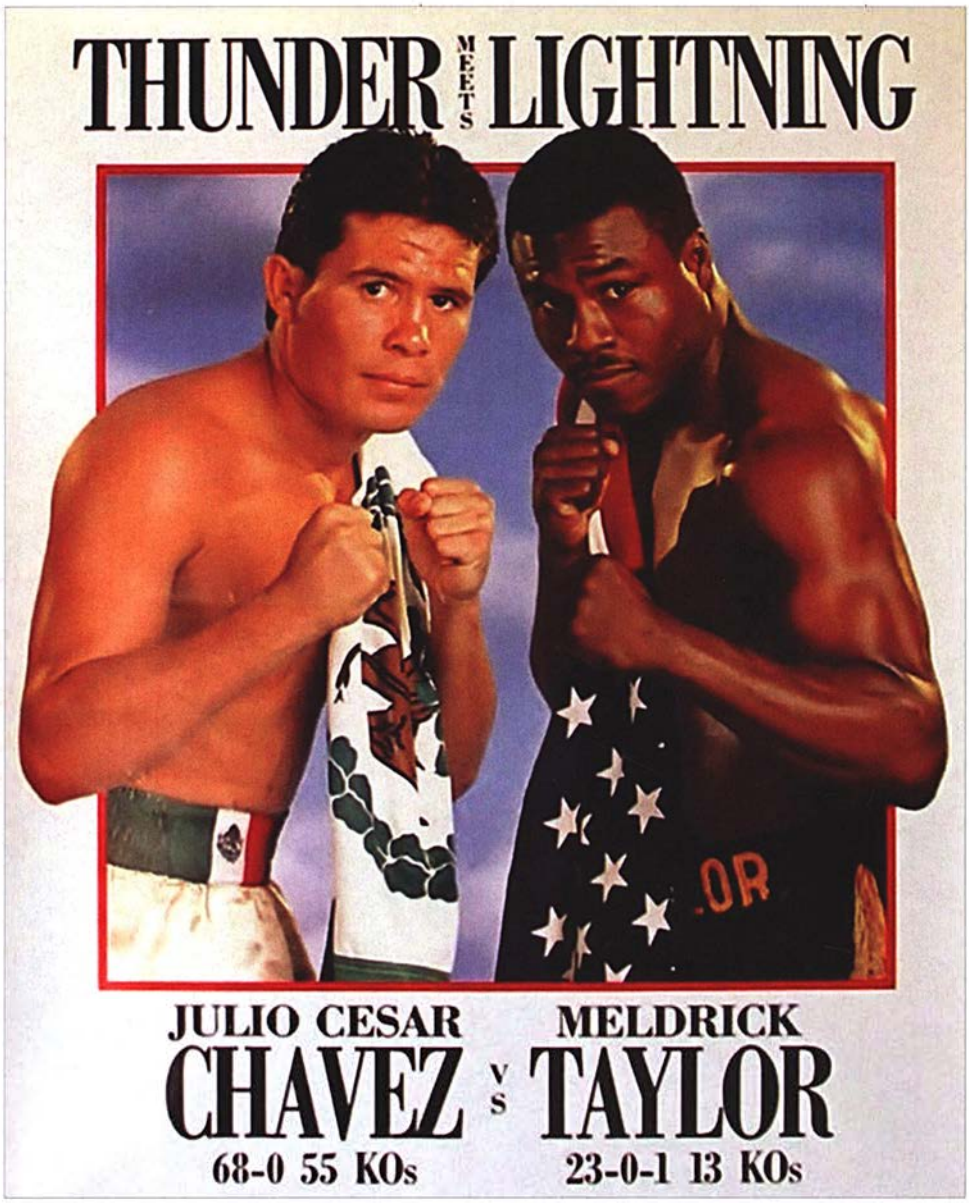
Chavez-Taylor I was the kind of fight that boxing fans were privileged to see in an era when the best fought the best. Chavez, the WBC 140-pound champion, entered the ring at the Hilton Hotel in Las Vegas with a 68-0 record. Taylor, a 1984 Olympic gold medalist, held the IBF 140-pound title and was undefeated in 25 fights.



Chavez alongside The Greatest and then-154-pound titleholder Terry Norris.

TAYLOR: THE RING MAGAZINE; ALI COURTESY OF WBC





There was a 15-hour time difference between Jakarta and Las Vegas. Muhammad and I watched the fight on television in his hotel suite live on Sunday morning. It was an international feed with Bob Sheridan as the blow-by-blow commentator. Scoring the fight, Ali and I had Taylor comfortably ahead in the 11th round. Then …

Fade to black … The show had run long and the satellite time that Don King Productions reserved had expired.

Muhammad and I went down to the hotel dining room to eat lunch, assuming that Taylor would win a decision. Toward the end of our meal, TV executive Arnie Rosenthal came into the room and told us he'd heard that Chavez had won on a 12th-round knockout.

Later that week, Ali and I watched the end of the fight when it was replayed on Indonesian television. With 15 seconds to go in the final round, Chavez caught Taylor in a corner and dropped him with a hellacious right hand. Meldrick rose at the count of four. Referee Richard Steele looked into his eyes, asked "Are you OK?" and, not waiting for a response, stopped the fight. There were four seconds left on the clock. The official time of the stoppage was 2:58 of Round 12.

Taylor was hurt, but given the time left on the clock, it's unlikely that Chavez would have been able to hit him again. He certainly wouldn't have had time if Steele had waited for Meldrick to answer his question or instructed him to "walk toward me." Also, in 1990, a fighter could be saved by the bell ending the final round. So even if Taylor had been dropped a second time, he would have won the fight.

Thus it was that Bob Sheridan proclaimed, "Lou Duva (Taylor's trainer) went absolutely crazy in the corner. There'll be some controversy here."

Adding to the controversy, judge Chuck Giampa had Chavez ahead by a point at the time of the stoppage. Dave Moretti (108-101) and Jerry Roth (107-102) had more credible scorecards, each of them favoring Taylor.

Richard Steele defended the stoppage, saying, "I'm not the timekeeper and I don't care about the time. When I see a man who has had enough, I'm stopping the fight."

Ali had a different view.

"Stopping the fight was wrong," Muhammad told me after we watched the replay. "That little black boy from Philadelphia fought his whole life to get to where he was. And the referee took it all away from him." RING

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com.
His next book – Broken Dreams: Another Year Inside Boxing – *will be published by the University of Arkansas Press this autumn. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism. In 2019, he was selected for boxing's highest honor – induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.*

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RATINGS

SUMMARY ★ ANALYSIS

The Ring Ratings through fights of July 17, 2021

RECENT FIGHT RESULTS AND CHANGES IN THE RING'S DIVISIONAL RANKINGS BY BRIAN HARTY

POUND FOR POUND: Whatever the reasons were for his hesitancy to engage with Teofimo Lopez last October, Vasiliy Lomachenko (No. 9) had none of those misgivings vs. Masayoshi Nakatani (unrated), who found himself surrounded by The Matrix from the first round until the ninth, when the lanky contender from Japan finally collapsed. Loma's vintage demonstration of pugilistic geometry of course triggered talk of promoting the former P4P king – in some part because Lopez had beaten Nakatani in 2019 but failed to stop him – but the main factor in the Ratings Panel deciding to keep him at No. 9 was another man who fought in a different city on the same night: Gervonta Davis.

Lomachenko is back in the mix.

Briefly summarized, the discussion went like this: Both Lomachenko and Davis were expected to win their fights, but it was Davis who made the bigger statement in demolishing Mario Barrios, prompting talk of adding Tank to the P4P list. In order to do that, however, No. 10-rated Kazuto Ioka would be pushed out, and the majority of the panel still felt Ioka, a four-division titleholder, has a better resume than Davis. Despite the "he's back" vibes of Lomachenko's win, eye-test metrics are generally shunned when making these lists, so there was no way to justify not adding Davis to the list while elevating Lomachenko, whose win didn't prove as much. So it was a traffic jam in which nobody went anywhere.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT: Former super middleweight titleholder Gilberto Ramirez scored his best win yet at 175, knocking out Sullivan Barrera (unrated) in four rounds. It was enough for "Zurdo" to crack the ratings at No. 10, though he also got some help from the decision to remove No. 8-rated Umar Salamov, who hasn't impressed the panel in his most recent outings.

MIDDLEWEIGHT: With Gennadiy Golovkin's career longevity a mystery, Zhanibek Alimkhanuly (No. 9 last month) continued to make his case for inheriting the middleweight crown of Kazakhstan with an eighth-round stoppage of veteran Rob Brant (No. 8 last month). It was only the 10th pro fight for Alimkhanuly, but a rock-solid amateur foundation and some bone-rattling straight lefts allowed him to foil Brant's offense and overwhelm him on the punch stats until the American's corner decided they'd seen enough. Brant dropped off the list while "Qazaq Style" rose to No. 7 and undefeated Brit Felix Cash moved in at No. 10.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT: Jeison Rosario had some success in the early rounds, but Erickson Lubin's superior quickness and precision were lethal once he decided to go liver hunting in the sixth, resulting in two knockdowns – both on body shots – and a 10-count. Lubin's resume might still be haunted by a first-round loss to Jermell Charlo in 2017, but he notched his sixth consecutive win (four by stoppage) and rose from No. 6 to No. 4. Rosario (No. 4 last month), who was knocked out by the same Charlo in his previous fight, dropped off the list and Russia's Magomed Kurbanov took up the slack at No. 10.

Tim Tszyu remained at No. 7 after three rounds of brutalizing Steve Spark (unrated), who had stepped in as a late replacement for Michael Zerafa.

The Jermell Charlo-Brian Castano fight was the rare case in which a high-profile draw didn't trigger an avalanche of rage – a minor mudslide maybe, as Castano was widely seen as the winner. Most people just want to see the Argentine get another shot after what was an entertaining battle for the undisputed championship, where Castano gave the performance of his life early but was driven back by a championship-round surge from Charlo. And, as usual, there was one card – a 117-111 score for Charlo that bucked the 114-113 for Castano and the 114-114 tie – that left a taint that can only be washed away by a sequel. On the Ratings Panel, everyone agreed that Castano, who was defending his WBO title, deserved to rise from No. 3 to No. 1, just below division champ Charlo, who possesses all the other belts. The rematch might have to wait, though, as both men could be headed for mandatory obligations: Tszyu for Castano and Bakhram Murtazaliev for Charlo.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT: Davis (unrated last month) earned Fighter of the Month honors with his 11th-round stoppage of the resilient Barrios and a ranking at No. 6 in his 140-pound debut. Barrios (No. 7 last month) was knocked down to No. 9, and No. 10-rated Jose Pedraza was bumped off the list.

LIGHTWEIGHT: Lomachenko definitely looked brilliant in the slice-and-dice win over Nakatani (No. 9 at the time), but the Ukrainian wizard already sits at No. 1 under his nemesis and can't go higher unless he gets a rematch with Lopez – which he very, very much wants. Lopez tested positive for COVID-19, delaying his fight against George Kambosos, so look for further developments after that.

After ridiculously missing weight in his last fight at 130 pounds, Joseph Diaz Jr. (No. 4 junior lightweight last month) made the official jump to lightweight with a unanimous decision over Dominican veteran Javier Fortuna (No. 6 last month). It wasn't all smooth sailing for "Jo Jo" – he

was cut by a headbutt in the third and lost a point for hitting behind the head in the fourth – but he was impressive in showing he had the power and resilience to join the elite club at 135. He called out Ryan Garcia (No. 2) and Devin Haney (No. 3) after the win and claimed his own ranking at No. 6, which squeezed Nakatani out of the No. 10 spot. Fortuna dropped to No. 8.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT: Chris Colbert (No. 9 last month) likes jabs – a preference he expressed 421 times to Tugstsogt Nyambayar on July 3 in California. Colbert isn't just about the lost art of the stick, though; his exceptional hand speed worked just as well with the other punches he threw en route to a wide unanimous decision. With the win, the Brooklynite called out Gervonta Davis (who is still rated No. 1 at 130 pounds) and moved up in our ratings to No. 8.

Diaz was removed from his No. 4 spot and everyone below him moved up, creating an opening at No. 10 that was claimed by O'Shaquie Foster.

FEATHERWEIGHT: Nyambayar (No. 8) was soundly beaten by Colbert, but he took the fight on only two weeks' notice and went up in weight accordingly. With that in mind, he kept his position in the 126-pound rankings.

FLYWEIGHTS: In an all-Mexican matchup that the man on our cover would surely appreciate, WBC titleholder Julio Cesar Martinez (No. 1) and Joel Cordova (unrated) were throwing bombs at each other from the get-go, but the switch-hitting Martinez was still in another class. He floored his countryman in the sixth with a sweeping left and then finished him with a follow-up storm of punches.

Young Californian Ricardo Sandoval crossed The Pond and cashed in with a go-to-the-body strategy against Jay Harris, knocking the Welshman out in the eighth round to secure a shot at IBF titleholder Sunny Edwards (who is scheduled to face unrated Jayson Mama in September). Sandoval was unrated going in but jumped onto the list at No. 7 while Harris (No. 8 last month) was dropped.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT: Panama's Daniel Matellon remained undefeated with a hard-earned decision over former strawweight titleholder Jose Argumedo and replaced Carlos Canizales at No. 10 on the list.

STRAWWEIGHT: The Matellon fight was the second in a row at 108 pounds for Argumedo (No. 7 last month), so he was removed and Masataka Taniguchi moved into the vacancy at No. 10. RING

P4P

1. **CANELO ALVAREZ** — Mexico • 56-1-2 (38 KOs)
2. **NAOYA INOUE** — Japan • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
3. **TERENCE CRAWFORD** — U.S. • 37-0-0 (28 KOs)
4. **OLEKSANDR USYK** — Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
5. **JOSH TAYLOR** — U.K. • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
6. **ERROL SPENCE JR.** — U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)
7. **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** — U.S. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
8. **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** — Mexico • 42-3-0 (28 KOs)
9. **VASILIY LOMACHENKO** — Ukraine • 15-2-0 (11 KOs)
10. **KAZUTO IOKA** — Japan • 26-2-0 (15 KOs)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C	**TYSON FURY** RING, WBC	U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)
1	**ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO	U.K. • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)
2	**DEONTAY WILDER**	U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)
3	**DILLIAN WHYTE**	U.K. • 28-2-0 (19 KOs)
4	**JOSEPH PARKER**	New Zealand • 29-2-0 (21 KOs)
5	**ANDY RUIZ JR.**	U.S. • 34-2-0 (22 KOs)
6	**LUIS ORTIZ**	Cuba • 32-2-0 (27 KOs)
7	**MICHAEL HUNTER**	U.S. • 19-1-1 (13 KOs)
8	**OSCAR RIVAS**	Colombia • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
9	**OLEKSANDR USYK**	Ukraine • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
10	**JOE JOYCE**	U.K. • 12-0-0 (11 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C	**MAIRIS BRIEDIS** RING, IBF	Latvia • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
1	**YUNIEL DORTICOS**	Cuba • 24-2-0 (22 KOs)
2	**ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC	Congo • 28-2-0 (25 KOs)
3	**LAWRENCE OKOLIE** WBO	U.K. • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)
4	**THABISO MCHUNU**	S. Africa • 23-5-0 (13 KOs)
5	**KEVIN LERENA**	S. Africa • 26-1-0 (13 KOs)
6	**ANDREW TABITI**	U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)
7	**ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** WBA	France • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)
8	**KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**	Poland • 31-3-0 (19 KOs)
9	**ALEKSEI PAPIN**	Russia • 13-1-0 (12 KOs)
10	**MICHAL CIESLAK**	Poland • 21-1-0 (15 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C	**(VACANT)**	
1	**ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC	Russia • 16-0-0 (16 KOs)
2	**DMITRY BIVOL** WBA	Russia • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)
3	**JOE SMITH JR.**	U.S. • 27-3-0 (21 KOs)
4	**SERGEY KOVALEV**	Russia • 34-4-1 (29 KOs)
5	**BADOU JACK**	Sweden • 24-3-3 (14 KOs)
6	**ELEIDER ALVAREZ**	Colombia • 25-2-0 (13 KOs)
7	**MARCUS BROWNE**	U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
8	**MAXIM VLASOV**	Russia • 45-4-0 (26 KOs)
9	**LYNDON ARTHUR**	U.K. • 19-0-0 (13 KOs)
10	**GILBERTO RAMIREZ**	Mexico • 42-0-0 (28 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C	**CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA, WBC, WBO	Mexico • 56-1-2 (38 KOs)
1	**DAVID BENAVIDEZ**	U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)
2	**CALEB PLANT** IBF	U.S. • 21-0-0 (12 KOs)
3	**CALLUM SMITH**	U.K. • 27-1-0 (19 KOs)
4	**BILLY JOE SAUNDERS**	U.K. • 30-1-0 (14 KOs)
5	**ANTHONY DIRRELL**	U.S. • 33-2-2 (24 KOs)
6	**JOHN RYDER**	U.K. • 29-5-0 (16 KOs)
7	**DAVID LEMIEUX**	Canada • 43-4-0 (36 KOs)
8	**DANIEL JACOBS**	U.S. • 37-3-0 (30 KOs)
9	**FEDOR CHUDINOV**	Russia • 24-2-1 (16 KOs)
10	**CARLOS GONGORA**	Ecuador • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of July 17, 2021

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF
  Kazakhstan • 41-1-1 (36 KOs)
- **2 JERMALL CHARLO** WBC
  U.S. • 32-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **3 DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** WBO
  U.S. • 30-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **4 SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO**
  Ukraine • 13-3-0 (10 KOs)
- **5 RYOTA MURATA** WBA
  Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **6 JAIME MUNGUIA**
  Mexico • 37-0-0 (30 KOs)
- **7 ZHANIBEK ALIMKHANULY**
  Kazakhstan • 10-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **8 CHRIS EUBANK JR.**
  U.K. • 30-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **9 LIAM WILLIAMS**
  U.K. • 23-3-1 (18 KOs)
- **10 FELIX CASH**
  U.K. • 14-0-0 (10 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C JERMELL CHARLO** RING, WBC, IBF, WBA
  U.S. • 34-1-1 (18 KOs)
- **1 BRIAN CASTANO** WBO
  Argentina • 17-0-2 (12 KOs)
- **2 JARRETT HURD**
  U.S. • 24-2-0 (16 KOs)
- **3 ERISLANDY LARA**
  Cuba • 28-3-3 (16 KOs)
- **4 ERICKSON LUBIN**
  U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5 JULIAN WILLIAMS**
  U.S. • 27-2-1 (16 KOs)
- **6 TONY HARRISON**
  U.S. • 28-3-1 (21 KOs)
- **7 TIM TSZYU**
  Australia • 19-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **8 MICHEL SORO**
  France • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **9 SEBASTIAN FUNDORA**
  U.S. • 17-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **10 MAGOMED KURBANOV**
  Russia • 22-0-0 (13 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBC
  U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2 TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO
  U.S. • 37-0-0 (28 KOs)
- **3 MANNY PACQUIAO**
  Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **4 KEITH THURMAN**
  U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **5 SHAWN PORTER**
  U.S. • 31-3-1 (17 KOs)
- **6 YORDENIS UGAS** WBA
  Cuba • 26-4-0 (12 KOs)
- **7 DANNY GARCIA**
  U.S. • 36-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **8 JARON ENNIS**
  U.S. • 27-0-0 (25 KOs)
- **9 KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV**
  Uzbekistan • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **10 VERGIL ORTIZ JR.**
  U.S. • 17-0-0 (17 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C JOSH TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
  U.K. • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **1 REGIS PROGRAIS**
  U.S. • 26-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **2 JOSE RAMIREZ**
  U.S. • 26-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **3 JOSE ZEPEDA**
  U.S. • 34-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **4 VIKTOR POSTOL**
  Ukraine • 31-3-0 (12 KOs)
- **5 ARNOLD BARBOZA**
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **6 GERVONTA DAVIS**
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (24 KOs)
- **7 IVAN BARANCHYK**
  Russia • 20-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **8 SUBRIEL MATIAS**
  Puerto Rico • 17-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **9 MARIO BARRIOS**
  U.S. • 26-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **10 SHOHJAHON ERGASHEV**
  Uzbekistan • 20-0-0 (18 KOs)

Gilberto Ramirez (right) enters the 175-pound ratings at No. 10 courtesy of a fourth-round KO of unrated Sullivan Barrera.

Joseph Diaz Jr. (right) outpointed Javier Fortuna and took his No. 6 position at lightweight. Fortuna fell to No. 8.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C TEOFIMO LOPEZ** RING, WBA, WBO, IBF
  U.S. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **1 VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
  Ukraine • 15-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **2 RYAN GARCIA**
  U.S. • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3 DEVIN HANEY** WBC
  U.S. • 26-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **4 RICHARD COMMEY**
  Ghana • 30-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **5 LUKE CAMPBELL**
  U.K. • 20-4-0 (16 KOs)
- **6 JOSEPH DIAZ JR.**
  U.S. • 32-1-1 (15 KOs)
- **7 JORGE LINARES**
  Venezuela • 47-6-0 (29 KOs)
- **8 JAVIER FORTUNA**
  Dom. Rep. • 36-3-1 (25 KOs)
- **9 GEORGE KAMBOSOS JR.**
  Australia • 19-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **10 ISAAC CRUZ**
  Mexico • 22-1-1 (15 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

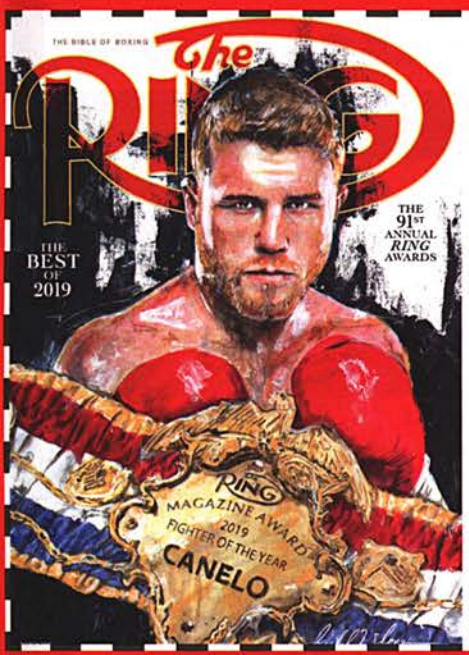
- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 GERVONTA DAVIS** WBA
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (24 KOs)
- **2 OSCAR VALDEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 29-0-0 (23 KOs)
- **3 JAMEL HERRING** WBO
  U.S. • 23-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **4 MIGUEL BERCHELT**
  Mexico • 37-2-0 (33 KOs)
- **5 TEVIN FARMER**
  U.S. • 30-5-1 (6 KOs)
- **6 SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV**
  Russia • 15-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **7 CHRIS COLBERT**
  U.S. • 16-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **8 SHAKUR STEVENSON**
  U.S. • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **9 ROGER GUTIERREZ**
  Venezuela • 25-3-1 (20 KOs)
- **10 O'SHAQUIE FOSTER**
  U.S. • 18-2-0 (11 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 GARY RUSSELL JR.** WBC
  U.S. • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **2 EMANUEL NAVARRETE** WBO
  Mexico • 33-1-0 (28 KOs)
- **3 XU CAN**
  China • 18-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **4 KID GALAHAD**
  U.K. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5 MAURICIO LARA**
  Mexico • 22-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **6 JOSH WARRINGTON**
  U.K. • 30-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **7 MARK MAGSAYO**
  Phil. • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **8 TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR**
  Mongolia • 12-2-0 (9 KOs)
- **9 JESSIE MAGDALENO**
  U.S. • 28-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **10 JOET GONZALEZ**
  U.S. • 24-1-0 (14 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 MURODJON AKHMADALIEV** IBF, WBA
  Uzbekistan • 9-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2 DANIEL ROMAN**
  U.S. • 29-3-1 (10 KOs)
- **3 STEPHEN FULTON** WBO
  U.S. • 19-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **4 BRANDON FIGUEROA** WBC
  U.S. • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **5 ANGELO LEO**
  U.S. • 21-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **6 HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA**
  Japan • 22-2-2 (15 KOs)
- **7 RAEESE ALEEM**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **8 AZAT HOVHANNISYAN**
  Armenia • 20-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **9 RONNY RIOS**
  U.S. • 33-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **10 RYOSUKE IWASA**
  Japan • 27-4-0 (17 KOs)



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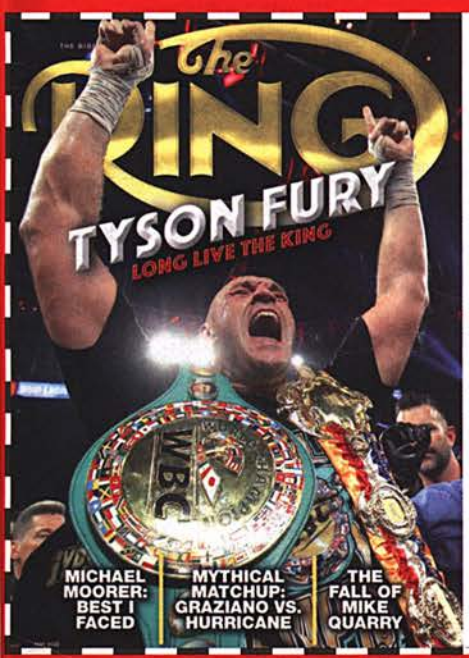

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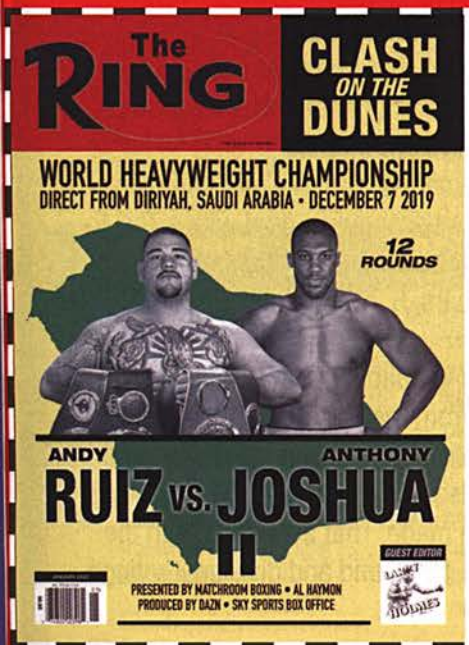

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BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA
  Japan • 21-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **1** **NONITO DONAIRE** WBC
  Phil. • 41-6-0 (27 KOs)
- **2** **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO
  Philippines • 30-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **3** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  Puerto Rico • 19-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **NORDINE OUBAALI**
  France • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 28-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **TAKUMA INOUE**
  Japan • 14-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **7** **JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-2-0 (18 KOs)
- **8** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
  Cuba • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **9** **MIKE PLANIA**
  Philippines • 25-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **GARY ANTONIO RUSSELL**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBA, WBC
  Mexico • 42-3-0 (28 KOs)
- **1** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 50-5-1 (43 KOs)
- **2** **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
  Nicaragua • 50-3-0 (41 KOs)
- **3** **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO
  Japan • 26-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **4** **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF
  Phil. • 33-1-2 (22 KOs)
- **5** **KHALID YAFAI**
  U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **6** **JOSHUA FRANCO**
  U.S. • 17-1-2 (8 KOs)
- **7** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 34-4-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **JEYVIER CINTRON**
  Puerto Rico • 11-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 39-4-1 (27 KOs)

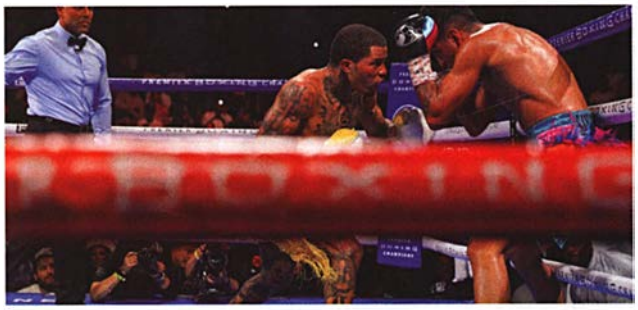
FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 18-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **2** **SUNNY EDWARDS** IBF
  U.K. • 16-0-0 (4 KOs)
- **3** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA
  Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **4** **JUNTO NAKATANI** WBO
  Japan • 21-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **MORUTI MTHALANE**
  S. Africa • 39-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **6** **MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)
- **7** **RICARDO SANDOVAL**
  U.S. • 19-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **8** **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 31-5-0 (21 KOs)
- **9** **ANGEL ACOSTA**
  Puerto Rico • 22-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **10** **MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
  Puerto Rico • 21-4-0 (16 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA
  Japan • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **1** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC
  Japan • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF
  Nicaragua • 36-2-0 (31 KOs)
- **3** **ELWIN SOTO** WBO
  Mexico • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 33-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **EDWARD HENO**
  Phil. • 14-1-5 (5 KOs)
- **6** **SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 19-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **7** **AGUSTIN GAUTO**
  Argentina • 16-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **8** **JESSE RODRIGUEZ**
  U.S. • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **ESTEBAN BERMUDEZ**
  Mexico • 14-3-2 (10 KOs)
- **10** **DANIEL MATELLON**
  Cuba • 12-0-2 (6 KOs)

Jermell Charlo (left) remained the 154-pound champ and Brian Castano moved to No. 1 following their draw.



Gervonta Davis (left) blitzed Mario Barrios in 11 rounds and took the No. 6 spot at 140 pounds. Barrios dropped to No. 9.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA
  Thailand • 21-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **PETCHMANEE CP FRESHMART** WBC
  Thailand • 36-1-0 (23 KOs)
- **3** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
  Thailand • 54-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **4** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO
  Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **5** **BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **6** **VIC SALUDAR**
  Phil. • 21-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **7** **SIMPIWE KONKCO**
  S. Africa • 19-6-0 (7 KOs)
- **8** **RENE MARK CUARTO** IBF
  Phil. • 19-2-2 (11 KOs)
- **9** **PEDRO TADURAN**
  Phil. • 14-3-1 (11 KOs)
- **10** **MASATAKA TANIGUCHI**
  Japan • 14-3-0 (9 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED
RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

WOMEN'S RATINGS

Through fights of July 17, 2021

POUND FOR POUND

1 **KATIE TAYLOR**
Ireland • 18-0-0 (6 KOs)

2 **CLARESSA SHIELDS**
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)

3 **AMANDA SERRANO**
Puerto Rico • 40-1-1 (30 KOs)

4 **JESSICA MCCASKILL**
U.S. • 10-2-0 (3 KOs)

5 **DELFINE PERSOON**
Belgium • 45-3-0 (18 KOs)

6 **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
Norway • 36-2-0 (9 KOs)

7 **MIKAELA MAYER**
U.S. • 15-0-0 (5 KOs)

8 **CHANTELLE CAMERON**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)

9 **SENIESA ESTRADA**
U.S. • 21-0-0 (8 KOs)

10 **SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **ELIN CEDERROOS** IBF, WBA
Sweden • 8-0-0 (4 KOs)
2 **FRANCHON CREWS-DEZURN** WBC, WBO
U.S. • 7-1-0 (2 KOs)
3 **ALICIA NAPOLEON ESPINOSA**
U.S. • 12-2-0 (7 KOs)
4 **EMA KOZIN**
Slovenia • 21-0-1 (11 KOs)
5 **SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHT
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

C **CLARESSA SHIELDS** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)
1 **SAVANNAH MARSHALL**
U.K. • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **CHRISTINA HAMMER**
Germany • 26-1-0 (12 KOs)
3 **TORI NELSON**
U.S. • 20-2-3 (4 KOs)
4 **TAYLA HARRIS**
Australia • 7-0-1 (3 KOs)
5 **EMA KOZIN**
Slovenia • 21-0-1 (11 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

C **CLARESSA SHIELDS** RING, WBC, WBO, IBF
U.S. • 11-0-0 (2 KOs)
1 **MARIE EVE DICAIRE**
Canada • 17-1-0 (0 KOs)
2 **HANNA GABRIELS** WBA
Costa Rica • 21-2-1 (12 KOs)
3 **MIKAELA LAUREN**
Sweden • 32-6-0 (13 KOs)
4 **CHRIS NAMUS**
Uruguay • 25-6-0 (8 KOs)
5 **PATRICIA BERGHULT**
Sweden • 14-0-0 (3 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

C **JESSICA MCCASKILL** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
U.S. • 10-2-0 (3 KOs)
1 **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
Norway • 36-2-0 (9 KOs)
2 **LAYLA MCCARTER**
U.S. • 44-13-5 (11 KOs)
3 **ORNELLA DOMINI**
Switzerland • 15-2-0 (3 KOs)
4 **VICTORIA BUSTOS**
Argentina • 21-6-0 (0 KOs)
5 **LOLITA MUZEYA**
Zambia • 16-0-0 (8 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **CHANTELLE CAMERON** WBC
U.K. • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **CHRISTINA LINARDATOU** WBO
Greece • 13-2-0 (6 KOs)
3 **MARY MCGEE** IBF
U.S. • 27-3-0 (15 KOs)
4 **ERICA FARIAS**
Argentina • 26-4-0 (10 KOs)
5 **KALI REIS** WBA
U.S. • 17-7-1 (5 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

C **KATIE TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO
Ireland • 18-0-0 (6 KOs)
1 **DELFINE PERSOON**
Belgium • 45-3-0 (18 KOs)
2 **CHANTELLE CAMERON**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (8 KOs)
3 **ESTELLE MOSSELY**
Belgium • 9-0-0 (1 KOs)
4 **MIRIAM GUTIERREZ**
Spain • 13-1-0 (5 KOs)
5 **NATASHA JONAS**
U.K. • 9-2-1 (7 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **MIKAELA MAYER** WBO
U.S. • 15-0-0 (5 KOs)
2 **TERRI HARPER** WBC
U.K. • 11-0-1 (6 KOs)
3 **MAIVA HAMADOUCHE** IBF
France • 22-1-0 (18 KOs)
4 **HYUN MI CHOI** WBA
South Korea • 18-0-1 (4 KOs)
5 **EWA BRODNICKA**
Poland • 20-1-0 (2 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **AMANDA SERRANO** WBC, WBO
Puerto Rico • 40-1-1 (30 KOs)
2 **SARAH MAHFOUD**
Denmark • 10-0-0 (3 KOs)
3 **ERIKA CRUZ HERNANDEZ** WBA
Mexico • 13-1-0 (3 KOs)
4 **JELENA MRDJENOVICH**
Canada • 41-11-2 (19 KOs)
5 **NINA MEINKE**
Germany • 12-2-0 (3 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **JACKIE NAVA**
Mexico • 37-4-4 (16 KOs)
2 **MAYERLIN RIVAS** WBA
Venezuela • 16-4-2 (10 KOs)
3 **DINA THORSLUND** WBO
Denmark • 16-0-0 (6 KOs)
4 **YAMILETH MERCADO** WBC
Mexico • 18-2-0 (5 KOs)
5 **SEGOLENE LEFEBVRE**
France • 14-0-0 (1 KOs)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **ZULINA MUNOZ**
Mexico • 53-3-2 (30 KOs)
2 **YULIHAN LUNA AVILA** WBC
Mexico • 21-3-1 (3 KOs)
3 **MARIANA JUAREZ**
Mexico • 55-10-4 (19 KOs)
4 **MARIA CECILIA ROMAN** IBF
Argentina • 15-5-1 (0 KOs)
5 **DINA THORSLUND** WBO
Denmark • 16-0-0 (6 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **LOURDES JUAREZ** WBC
Mexico • 32-2-0 (4 KOs)
2 **GUADALUPE MARTINEZ**
Mexico • 20-10-0 (6 KOs)
3 **JESSICA CHAVEZ**
Mexico • 32-5-3 (4 KOs)
4 **DIANA FERNANDEZ**
Mexico • 23-4-0 (4 KOs)
5 **ESMERALDA MORENO**
Mexico • 35-12-2 (11 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **NAOKO FUJIOKA** WBA
Japan • 19-2-1 (7 KOs)
2 **ARELY MUCINO** WBO
Mexico • 29-3-2 (10 KOs)
3 **AVA KNIGHT**
U.S. • 19-2-5 (5 KOs)
4 **MARLEN ESPARZA**
U.S. • 10-1-0 (1 KOs) WBC
5 **IBETH ZAMORA**
Mexico • 32-7-0 (12 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

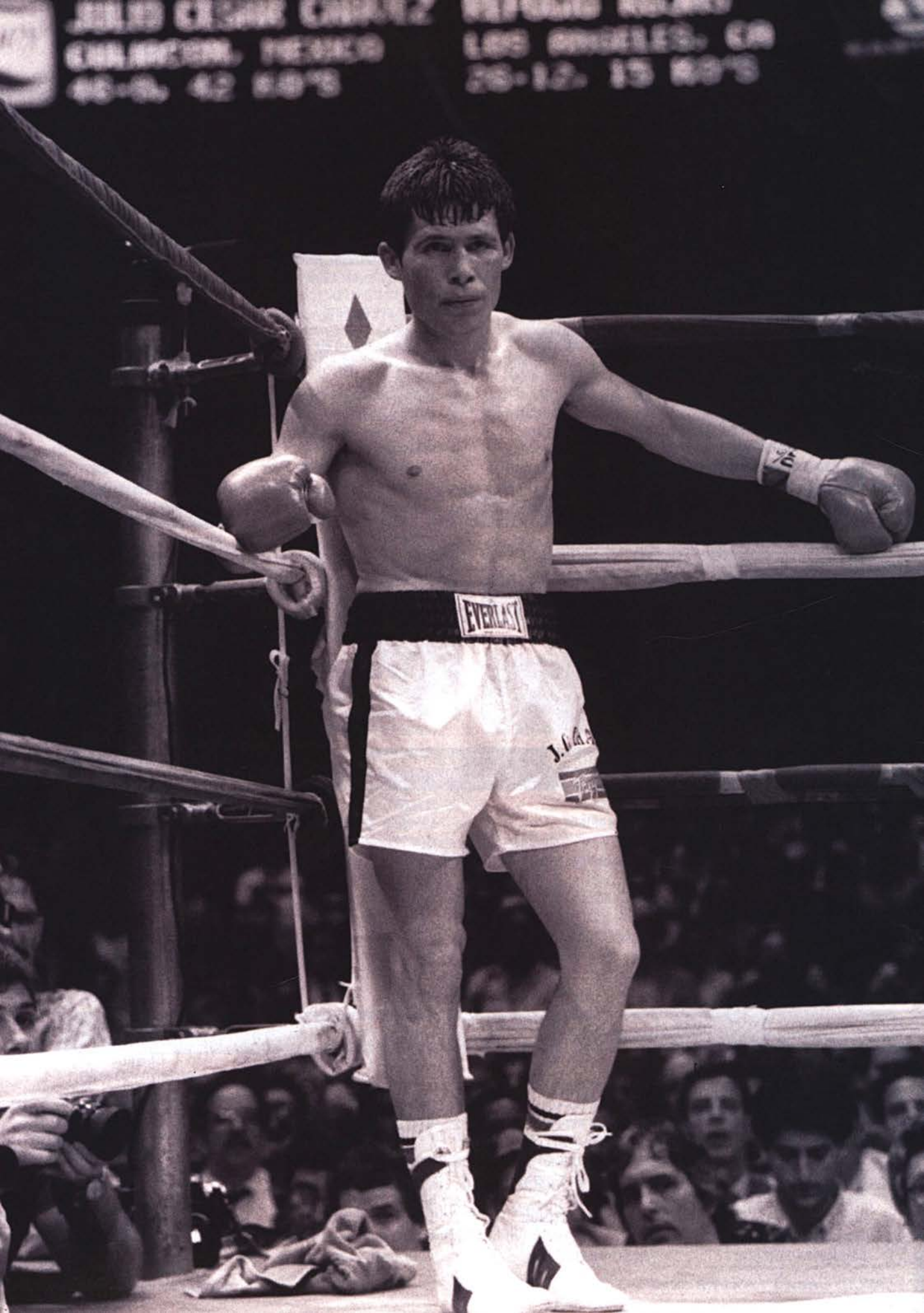
C **(VACANT)**
1 **SENIESA ESTRADA** WBO
U.S. • 21-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **KENIA ENRIQUEZ**
Mexico • 23-1-0 (9 KOs)
3 **TSUNAMI TENKAI**
Japan • 28-13-1 (16 KOs)
4 **EVELYN BERMUDEZ** IBF
Argentina • 14-0-1 (4 KOs)
5 **KIM CLAVEL**
Canada • 13-0-0 (2 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **SENIESA ESTRADA** WBA
U.S. • 21-0-0 (8 KOs)
2 **CHRISTINA RUPPRECHT** WBC
Germany • 11-0-1 (3 KOs)
3 **YOKASTA VALLE** IBF
Nicaragua • 21-2-0 (9 KOs)
4 **ANABEL ORTIZ**
Mexico • 31-4-0 (4 KOs)
5 **ETSUKO TADA** WBO
Japan • 20-3-3 (7 KOs)

ATOMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 102 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**
1 **MONSERRAT ALARCON** WBA
Mexico • 15-4-2 (0 KOs)
2 **FABIANA BYTYQI** WBC
Czech Rep. • 17-0-1 (5 KOs)
3 **MIKA IWAKAWA** WBO
Japan • 10-5-1 (3 KOs)
4 **NAO IKEYAMA**
Japan • 18-6-4 (5 KOs)
5 **ERI MATSUDA**
Japan • 4-0-1 (1 KO)


EVERLAST

THE CHAMP

IN HIS OWN WORDS

IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE RING, **JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ**, THE LION OF CULIACAN, OFFERED READERS A HEARTFELT ACCOUNT OF HIS RISE, FALL AND RESURRECTION

By **Julio Cesar Chavez**

(Interview by **Bernardo Osuna** / Translated by **Diego Morilla**)

"I WAS A NATURAL FIGHTER,"

said the champ, again and again. And no one who has seen him fight could ever doubt that. But there is always a deep second layer behind a statement of that nature. A heartbreaking, enlightening and amazing story lies behind every man who chooses to climb through the ropes for money and glory, and the story of Julio Cesar Chavez Gonzalez is no exception.

In an interview conducted by Bernardo Osuna and then transcribed and edited by Diego Morilla, Chavez opened up to The Ring about his early years, his dreams, his frustrations and his life in boxing in a string of funny, emotional and intense answers to some of the questions that still linger about him. How did he become a boxer? Where did his ferocious style come from? Was he really disqualified in his 12th pro bout? How good could he have been if the vices of fame and fortune hadn't caught up to him? The amazing story is told here in Chavez's own words.

More than anything, what led me to the gym was the desire to provide for my family. I got into boxing due to necessity. I didn't do it because I liked it. I didn't like boxing at all; I've always said this. My two brothers used to fight; I used to fit their gloves on my hands, and they'd force me to fight other kids, and they'd give me one peso or 50 cents. Logically, since they did this every day, you start getting to like it. And I got into it because I made enough money to build a house for my mother, so she didn't have to wash and iron clothes for other people. More than anything, that's what brought me to the gym.

—

I remember that my mom would be washing and ironing clothes, and I was a little kid, and I would hug her leg and say, "Mom, when I become world champion, you'll see ... you won't have to wash other people's clothes again." And my mom would put her hand on my head, and say, "Ah, you little *pendejo* ... When are you going to be world champion? Never!" (laughs) And I would say, "No, mom, you'll see!" And then when I got the title, I told her, "You see now, mother? I did what I promised I would do!" And she said, "Yes ... but you are still a *pendejo*... You got married too young! They took you away from me!" (laughs)

—

I had only 14 amateur fights. I remember that in the [last amateur] fight I lost in Mexico City, I got robbed. I remember that I was competing at the national tournaments in boxing, in soccer, in volleyball and basketball. Incredible! And I was a champion in all of that ... and I lost in boxing! They robbed me in that fight. I remember that (legendary former fighter) Kid Azteca was there that night, and he said, "You won this fight. You will be a world champion." I will never forget those words. And after that, I got disappointed with amateur boxing and I became a professional fighter.

—

I was a natural fighter. All I did was spar, and then I would hit the heavy bag and the double-end bag. That's all I did. I never worked the punching mitts, I never quite learned how to work the speed bag, you know? I was a natural. I'll tell you an anecdote: When I fought Ruben Castillo, who was a helluva fighter, in my first junior lightweight title defense, I arrived at the gym ... and Castillo was training there too! When I saw him hitting the mitts ... pam pam pam pam pam pam ... he was an artist with those things! And I thought, "Who's this guy? What a fighter!" And he was the guy I had to fight! And I said, "Shit, man!" I was terrified! (laughs) All I did for training was fighting, and I always trained with fighters who were more experienced than me. And that's how

LAS-DOS
MM
CHAVEZ

"LET ME BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS: I COULD HAVE BEEN UNDEFEATED FOR 100 FIGHTS."

I learned. They would beat the crap out of me, and I would always want to learn more. I was a pure fighter and I wanted to fight with them and learn from them.

—

In my debut, I fought Andres Felix, who is still alive. They nicknamed him "Virolo" (cross-eyed). A tall fighter, he had a lot of professional fights, and I was making my debut[1]. It was a very tough fight for me, quite complicated. Fortunately, I won (via KO) in the sixth round, but I left the ring thinking, "I am not fighting anymore." Because I was so tired, I clearly saw that the amateurs and the pros were different games. I didn't feel good. I didn't look good, even though people said I did. I remember feeling that I didn't have the talent to succeed as a professional boxer. So I stopped going to the gym for a while. I returned, but only because of the money. But I always had that concern in the back of my mind, that professional boxing was too different from the amateurs, and I got so tired during that fight that I really didn't feel like going back into the ring again.

—

Honestly, I never really got to enjoy my youth. I did in other ways, but always with a lot of discipline and dedication, because I started boxing professionally when I was 18 years old. And when I did, my life changed completely because I was always a pro. I never drank, never smoked, never out there "pitching or hitting," like we say. (laughs) I never went to parties, never stayed up late. It was difficult and complicated for me, but I believe it paid off, because look at what I did later, right?

—

My [controversial 12th] fight, against Miguel Ruiz? No, no... look, it wasn't a low blow. Because a lot of people don't know this: In the first round, I hit him with a right hand just as the bell rang [to end the round]. I hit him and he goes down ... the referee counts him out and I win by knockout. But after that, his manager started mouthing off and there was confusion and they said I was disqualified. It is a lie. I was never disqualified. No one knows the truth, which is what I am telling you right now. I dropped him just as the bell was still ringing, and the referee reached the full count. I knocked him out. And then his trainer jumped in the ring and said I had hit him after the bell. They took five minutes to discuss the whole thing, but in the end, I won. I knocked him out convincingly. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Some people say they reversed the ruling months later[2], and that's not true.

—

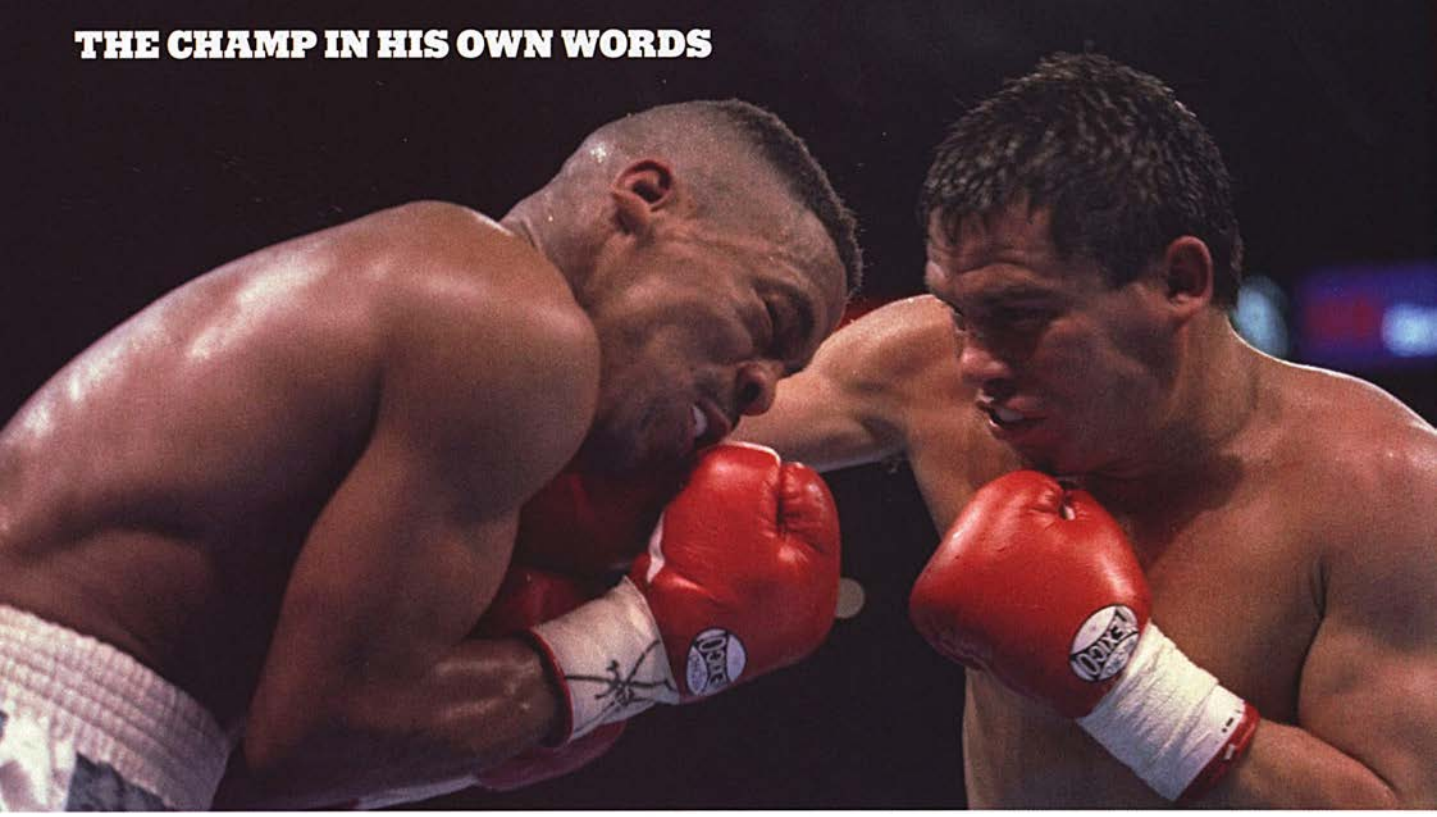
The one fighter that initiated me [into boxing] was Juan Antonio Lopez. He fought twice for the world title against Wilfredo Gomez. But the one I loved watching was Ruben Olivares. I liked his style a lot, his way of fighting, throwing that hook to the liver. But the one who taught me how to throw that hook to the liver was Lopez. I would spar a lot with him, and he loved throwing that hook to the body. So I practiced it a lot, and the rest is history.

—

I felt that I could not lose back then. Like I said, I was always a natural fighter. It is not the same, being a natural fighter as opposed to being molded into a fighter. Nowadays, they make fighters. And it is good, because they get their discipline through repetition, again and again and again. But it is not the same as being a natural! No one taught me; I was taught by the beatings I took, getting in the ring to fight with guys far more experienced than me. Learning every day to move around, to shadowbox. And now, fighters today have other methods, and those are logically better than the old ones, because new technologies help fighters to become great. But it's not the same.

—

Let me be clear about this: I could have been undefeated for 100 fights. I would not have only been the best Mexican fighter of all time, but the greatest of all time, in history, period! If I had taken care of myself, I could have been unbeaten for 100 fights, no problem. The one fight that derailed me was when I fought "Macho" Camacho. Because that fight was crazy! I felt that I had won everything. I had a few million in the bank, I had my customized cars, I had my mansions, my private plane; I had it all! What else could I do? And right then, it was when I tasted the damned drugs. And that's where I got hooked. But I still kept winning fights! Because I was a natural fighter, one of the good ones! But with time, my excesses with drugs and alcohol kept increasing more and more. I kept fighting, but the punches started hurting me more and more. I felt more and more that I was due to lose. Until



Frankie Randall, who ended Chavez's legendary unbeaten streak, on the receiving end.

that fight with Frankie Randall arrives. Imagine this: I spent all of December drinking and doing drugs, and the fight was on January 29. Imagine how I felt. Especially knowing that he was always a challenge for me! So when I took that loss ... I was obviously hurt. Imagine, I was received back in Culiacan as if I had won! People in the streets were crying ... and I thought, "My God, what did I do? Why didn't I train like I used to?" Seeing all those people crying ... right then I realized what I meant to them.

—

I will tell you why I do not regret becoming a drug addict and an alcoholic. But first I will tell you what I do regret. I regret not having someone advising me and guiding me well in my life. Not being surrounded by people who could guide me, like the fighters today. That's my main regret. Because if I had someone who would have guided me properly, taking care of my finances ... even though I managed to set my entire family for life, thank God. But I don't regret falling into my addictions, because thanks to the fact that God gave me another opportunity in life ... because I was dying. I was about to take my own life, you see? And I would have died if I had continued doing drugs, because I was already vomiting blood. I was in the hospital all the time, thinking about killing myself, or having a stroke. Those were very difficult times, very overwhelming. I hurt a lot of people, but above all I hurt myself. But when I received another opportunity, I thanked God for having fallen into that addiction. Because after that, you can't imagine how many people I was able to help, thanks to my recovery. And that's what ... (choking back tears) what makes me so proud.

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Right now, I am in the habit of training every day. I believe that I learned this thanks to my rehabilitation. I am about to be 12 years sober, so since I started recovering from all my addictions, I became addicted now to exercise and training. And the exhibitions I've done have been for charity. Obviously it has been very stressful because of my age, but I am happy because I have been able to help a lot of people. And now it has become a viral thing; everyone wants to come back and do exhibitions. And this is good, because this is how the young people can see all those great legends in a ring again. Whatever we have left is there for them to see and remember us. When they proposed to do the first exhibition, naturally I refused. Because it's not the same to hit the heavy bag every day as getting into the ring, even with headgear. It's dangerous. The punches still thud inside your head. I started those exhibitions for a kid, the son of Jose Luis Castillo, who had a stroke. And that's how I started doing it, all for charity.

—

With [Roberto Duran], a lot of people got confused and started thinking that we were going to do an exhibition, but Duran is much older than me. But we're doing a reality show where he will have his fighters and I will have mine, and it will be Mexico vs. Panama. Maybe before

The great champion has carved out a successful career as an analyst for ESPN and TV Azteca.

we get to crown the best fighter of the show, we may spar for a few rounds. Who knows? And I am going to do one more exhibition ... but against [Oscar] De La Hoya! (laughs)

—

Today, I see myself older, yes, but I see myself clean and happy. Like I said, it is incredible the displays of love that I receive every day, wherever I go. This is the best thing. Money comes and goes, and I will not take that with me. What I take with me all the time is the love of my people, and that's the most important thing for me in my everyday life. Going out in the streets and receiving all those blessings ... this is something no one can take away from me, until the day I die.

[1] *Felix is listed as a debutant for that fight as well, according to Boxrec.com.*

[2] *Boxrec indicates that "For many years all the leading record books, including both Pugilato and* The Ring Record Book, *recorded the first loss of Julio Cesar Chavez as being by disqualification. This has since been changed to a knockout victory for Chavez, based on confirmation from the local boxing commission in Culiacan that it altered the verdict the following day. Ramon Felix, manager of Chavez, happened to be a member of the Culiacan commission at the time." The A-Z of World Boxing by Bert Blewett (1996) at p. 341.*

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FINISHING SCHOOL

CHAVEZ'S TITLE REIGN AT 130 POUNDS SOLIDIFIED HIS STATUS AS AN ELITE FIGHTER AND PUT HIM ON THE PATH TO BECOMING THE KING OF ALL MEXICAN FIGHTERS

By **Cliff Rold**

To quote former heavyweight champion Max Schmeling: The late WBC President Jose Sulaiman "saw something."

"One day I was invited to see [Julio Cesar Chavez] fight in Los Angeles," Sulaiman recounted in *J.C. Chavez*, a 2007 documentary from director Diego Luna. "They put him on as a palooka against a Texan-Mexican who was undefeated and was supposedly going to be the world champion. And Julio had a bad stomachache. He fought. And to my surprise, I saw a great Mexican boxer who was tremendous. Not with any great style, because in those days he didn't have much, but a boxer who went toe-to-toe. Who always hit back, who dogged his opponent and who punched with a natural ability. And he beat the Texan decisively. And it had to be very decisive for them to give the fight to Julio. Otherwise they would have robbed him of it."

The passage of time makes it hard to remember, but there was a time in the career of almost every boxing great when they were just another new face.

It takes time to be refined in boxing's violent craft.

It takes wins to separate from the pack.

And it takes opportunity to become a champion.

The fight Sulaiman referred to isn't specified in Luna's documentary. A quick look at Chavez's record makes for an easy guess.

On September 1, 1983, Chavez earned a decision over Adrian Arreola on the Olympic Auditorium undercard of the fateful fight between Alberto Davila and Kiko Bejines wherein Bejines suffered a life-ending injury. [Editor's note: Arreola had four losses at the time and fought out of East L.A.]

What Sulaiman saw against Arreola opened doors quickly for Chavez (the performance also caught the eye of powerful promoter Don King, who, fortunately for Chavez, often worked closely with the Mexico-based WBC).

"I began to follow his career until we classified him," Sulaiman continued. "The title was vacant, and at that time Julio was around sixth or seventh. And I noticed that after [Mario] Martinez, who was number one, the rest of them were losers, veterans who were only there because of their names. And I realized that Chavez was undefeated. And I believed he was a great fighter. And I thought he had the talent to become world champion. And so it was due to my own personal decision that I moved Julio up to number two. And he was committed to the obligatory title fight against 'Azabache' Martinez."

One year and three wins passed for the 22-year-old Chavez before he was matched with Martinez for the WBC 130-pound belt Hector Camacho vacated to move to lightweight. The 19-year-old Martinez, 33-1-2, was rated No. 1 in the division by The Ring behind lineal world champion and WBA titlist Rocky Lockridge. Chavez, already 43-0, was rated third.

Martinez entered with 13 straight wins, was unbeaten in his previous 20 starts and just months removed from a fifth-round stoppage of respected veteran Rolando Navarrete.

With ring announcer Jimmy Lennon Jr. also making his world championship debut, Chavez ended Martinez's win streak with authority in the sort of fierce, crowd-pleasing affair Chavez would render common for years to come. All of what would make him great was on display: the chin, the determination, the left to the body and the pinpoint right hand Chavez could always find, even under fire. »

FINISHING SCHOOL

In Round 8, Chavez went to close quarters against a battered and bloodied Martinez, slamming home short rights and lefts off the ropes in the final minute. Martinez returned fire but was beaten to the punch, shot after shot, until referee John Thomas saved the fighter from himself at the bell. Chavez had graduated into the main event and championship scene at the Olympic Auditorium.

It would be almost a decade before Chavez found out what it was like to be on the losing side of a championship contest, but winning the title didn't mean Chavez was the finished product he would become. Over the course of nine title defenses, with three additional non-title appearances along the way, Chavez would mix moments of mastery with the sort of challenging nights necessary to grow as a young professional.

Chavez's reign at junior lightweight (aka super featherweight), was a chance to learn on the job as champion.

His first defense came in April 1985 against veteran Ruben Castillo. Castillo had been one of the foremost bridesmaids of his generation, losing in three previous title tries to Alexis Arguello at junior lightweight and Salvador Sanchez and Juan Laporte at featherweight. Castillo's luck didn't improve with Chavez.

In the sixth round, trapped on the ropes and taking punishment to the head and body, Castillo opened up in an attempt to slow Chavez down. Chavez refused to oblige, nailing Castillo with a left uppercut and a final right to take everything out of the challenger's legs. Castillo stumbled out of a failed clinch and collapsed to the canvas, unable to beat the count of 10. The Ring's recap of the fight referred to Chavez as a "brilliant boxer-puncher who hopes to soon be compared to the former Mexican greats."

That July 1985 issue, celebrating Marvelous Marvin Hagler's win versus Thomas Hearns on the cover, gave an indication of just how fast Chavez's star was rising. Splashed across the right hand corner of the issue, it read, "Julio Cesar Chavez: Mexico's Latest Kayo Sensation." Chavez's next defense was even more sensational.

Less than three months after the Castillo win, Chavez defended against former titleholder Roger Mayweather in the first of what would eventually be two fights. It says a lot about the courage of the late Mayweather, whose nephew Floyd would make his own waves at junior lightweight and elsewhere a fistic generation later, that he ever wanted to see Chavez again after their first encounter.

Broadcast live on CBS, it would be Chavez's first appearance on U.S. national television and in the boxing mecca of Las Vegas. It would also be the first of nine Chavez championship fights refereed by Richard Steele, a name that would later figure greatly in Chavez's career.

Mayweather boxed a smart, careful first frame behind a long jab and was attempting to do it again in Round 2. A rapier right hand from Mayweather landed flush on Chavez and the favorite son of Culiacan didn't budge. Moments later, Chavez responded with his own right hand and Mayweather's knees buckled badly. Another right hand sent him to the floor, but Steele ruled it a slip.

Mayweather remained standing only briefly before another right hand put him down. He beat the count and sought to survive, enduring punishment against a rushed Chavez who couldn't find the finishing blow right away. Steele ruled another Mayweather trip to the floor a slip before Chavez finally caught Mayweather with a left hook for the second official knockdown. Steele stopped the contest.

Writing in the September 1985 issue of The Ring, the great Jack Welsh stated, "Chavez ... was elated to let American fans see on TV why his countrymen were comparing him to such Mexican ring immortals as Ruben Olivares, Carlos Zarate, Jose Napoles, and the late Salvador Sanchez."

Chavez's next defense, against Dwight Pratchett in September 1985, would end with Chavez extending the distance for the first time in a title fight. The Pratchett win could best be described as a workmanlike effort. Welsh wrote, "It seemed Chavez was more interested in getting a good workout than recording his 42nd victory inside the distance."

Chavez returned to his punishing ways after his next bout, a five-round technical decision over Jeff Bumpus, scoring three straight stoppages, including two title defenses – against Faustino Barrios in Chavez's French debut and then Refugio Rojas in Chavez's Madison Square Garden debut.

Chavez's next defense presented real championship adversity.

On August 3, 1986, Chavez traveled to Monaco to meet the challenge of Rocky Lockridge. Under different circumstances, it could well have been a showdown of champions. Lockridge lost the Ring and WBA honors three fights prior by way of a hotly debated majority decision to Wilfredo Gomez on hostile turf in Puerto Rico.

The Gomez loss wasn't the first time Lockridge was unlucky on narrow cards. He would be unlucky again versus Chavez, losing a majority decision. Both men had their moments, with Chavez often landing harder and a busy Lockridge landing in volume. Lockridge made a better case than anyone had so far against a still only 24-year-old Chavez.

Interpreting for Chavez after the bout, NBC's Ferdie Pacheco relayed that Chavez felt like it was time to head up to lightweight, that he couldn't make the 130-pound limit much longer and that he'd been hampered by a hand injury and only having 22 days to train for the difficult challenger. Lockridge felt he'd done enough to win, telling Pacheco,

Former featherweight titleholder Juan Laporte tested Chavez to the limit in New York.

"I thought I had edged him out." It wasn't to be for Lockridge, nor for cornerman Lou Duva, who was only beginning to experience the vexing sting of near misses against Chavez.

While Lockridge came closer than anyone before him, Chavez's next defense would prove even tougher on the undercard of James "Bonecrusher" Smith's surprising first-round upset of Tim Witherspoon for the WBA heavyweight title.

Puerto Rican Juan Laporte was a fixture near the top of the featherweight and junior lightweight divisions throughout the 1980s. He came up short in title tries at featherweight against Salvador Sanchez and Eusebio Pedroza, the latter with some controversy. Laporte finally struck gold in 1982, handing Mario Miranda his first defeat for the WBC crown left vacant by the death of Sanchez. Laporte would defend the belt twice before losing it to countryman Wilfredo Gomez. Entering the ring with Chavez on December 12, 1986, Laporte had rebounded from Gomez and a subsequent loss to Barry McGuigan with two victories.

With the New York crowd on his side, all those rounds with some of the era's best showed for Laporte. Mixing up his attack, he would move and box before settling inside with Chavez and peppering the champion with accurate, short punches. Laporte would patiently wait for Chavez, make him miss, and then land to the body or with right and left uppercuts. It was a smart, tactical approach and never let Chavez get comfortable. Both men competed to the end and there was real wonder about how the judges would rule.

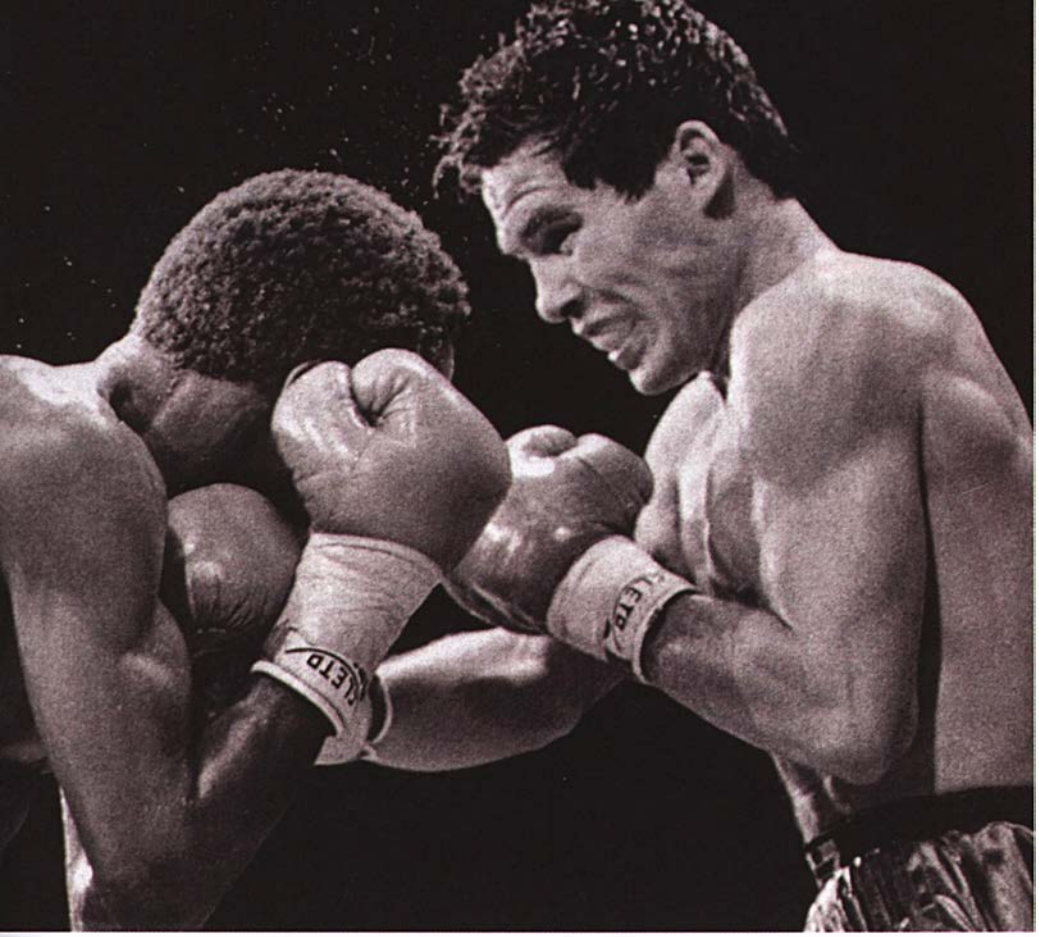
Bob Sheridan, providing commentary for the international broadcast, stated he thought he'd seen an even fight. The judges disagreed unanimously at 114-113, 115-114 and a wide 117-112 card for Chavez. The crowd on hand voiced noisy disapproval. They were not alone.

The post-fight report in the May 1987 issue of KO Magazine was scathing, reading in part, "It is difficult to call Chavez 'overrated' because he does possess a great many skills and quite a few intangibles that have helped him make seven defenses of his WBC [junior lightweight] crown. But it is difficult to justify the label of 'best pound-for-pound fighter in the world' that some sportswriters have attached to him. In fact, if he puts anything back-to-back, it's disappointing outings. So what should we call him? How about damn lucky. As in damn lucky to still be champion. Let's not mince words. Chavez lost to Laporte. It's just that Laporte wasn't fortunate enough to get the decision."

Surprisingly, after such adamant prose, KO scored the contest just 114-113 for Laporte.

Herb Goldman, writing for The Ring, disagreed. "Chavez's stoicism

Chavez celebrates after narrowly outpointing Juan Laporte.



Chavez easily outpointed Danilo Cabrera in his final 130-pound title defense.

– he never gets riled – and his body attack told the story. Laporte was all in by the eighth, and even though he got a 'second wind' and won the last round, there was little doubt that Chavez's dominance from the sixth session through the tenth had won the day." Goldman's score was 117-115 for Chavez.

The scores that mattered were, in the end, well, all that mattered. Chavez had managed to get through the two toughest tests of his reign, back to back. It wouldn't be the last time in the Mexican icon's career where the end of his fight left fans and pundits debating the outcome.

However, it wouldn't happen again at junior lightweight. His junior welterweight showdown with Meldrick Taylor was still three years away.

Truly special prizefighters are able to turn narrow escapes, even defeats, early in their careers into learning moments to grow from. Muhammad Ali did it after a close call with Doug Jones. Roberto Duran did it after his first bout with Esteban De Jesus.

Chavez did it after Lockridge and Laporte. Those who doubted where he stood amongst his peers, pound-for-pound, wouldn't find much to criticize through the end of Chavez's run at 130 pounds.

In April 1987, Chavez made his eighth defense of the WBC belt with a third-round stoppage of Brazil's Francisco Tomas Da Cruz. The challenger came into the fight at 27-1, riding a glossy 21-fight win streak. The best of those wins for Da Cruz was against Ruben Castillo, and it wasn't nearly enough. A left hook drove Da Cruz to the ropes on rubbery legs in the third and a follow-up assault prompted a stoppage moments later.

Chavez's first championship reign would close on August 21, 1987, with a unanimous decision over Danilo Cabrera. Contested at the Hipodromo de Agua Caliente in Tijuana, the Cabrera win would be Chavez's first championship fight in his native Mexico. Cabrera had been stopped in previous title tries versus Barry McGuigan and Azumah Nelson but survived being dropped against Chavez and made it to the finish line in an otherwise shutout defeat.

Three months to the day after the Cabrera victory, Chavez would finally make the move he'd hinted at for more than a year to challenge WBA lightweight titlist Edwin Rosario. If Chavez's championship tenure at junior lightweight allowed him to learn on the job, the Rosario showdown provided the chance to present his dissertation as a professional.

Chavez's junior lightweight reign would be memorable regardless of what followed. His record stood at 54-0 with 45 knockouts, his championship mark at 10-0 with six knockouts, and Chavez's nine defenses were just one shy of the then-division record for consecutive defenses held jointly by Sammy Serrano (WBA) and Alfredo Escalera (WBC).

In terms of quality, eight of Chavez's title-fight opponents were ranked by The Ring. Six of the eight, all but featherweights Castillo and Rojas, were rated at junior lightweight. Four of those six (Martinez, Mayweather, Lockridge and Laporte) were rated no lower than third. Relative to their eras, Chavez's reign at junior lightweight rates with the divisional reigns of Alexis Arguello and Floyd Mayweather Jr. in terms of difficulty, and none of the three lost a fight at 130 pounds.

It was only a beginning for Chavez, whose total number of championship fights, and wins, wasn't quite a third of the way to complete. For El Gran Campeon Mexicano, the best was yet to come.

PEAK PERFORMANCE

CHAVEZ'S RISE TO THE TOP OF THE MYTHICAL POUND-FOR-POUND RATINGS BEGAN THE NIGHT HE DISMANTLED RESPECTED LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMP **EDWIN ROSARIO**

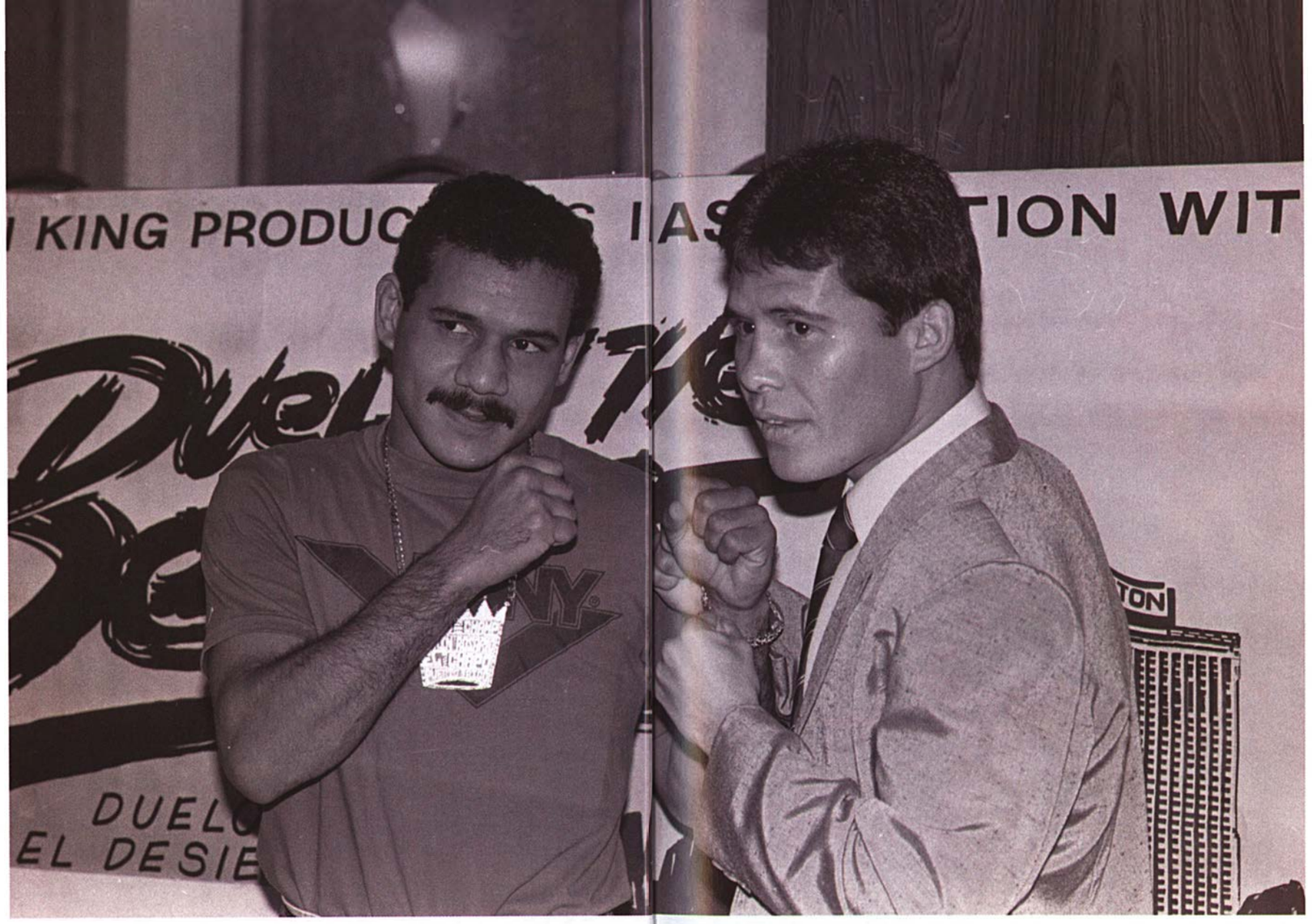
By **Ron Borges**

While many of a great artist's works may receive high praise, there is always one masterpiece that stands above the rest and defines his or her brushstrokes. So it was with Julio Cesar Chavez on the night of November 21, 1987.

When that night began, Chavez was 56-0 with 44 knockouts but had fought only 11 times in the U.S. and less than a year earlier had gone life and death in a WBC junior lightweight title defense against Juan Laporte in Madison Square Garden. Two of the judges had Chavez winning by the scantest of margins, 114-113 and 115-114, and even he conceded after the fight that he could not have argued had the decision gone to Laporte.

Now, just 11 months later, he was standing in the outdoor arena behind the Las Vegas Hilton set to move up to the lightweight division to challenge Edwin Rosario, the man considered the most powerful puncher in the 135-pound division. No one was quite sure what to expect of Chavez, but many felt Rosario would prove to be too strong and too devastating a puncher for the challenger to keep his unbeaten streak intact.

When the fight was first announced, Las Vegas listed it as a 6-to-5 pick 'em bet, meaning it was considered so even that you could have either fighter for the same price. By the time



Rosario's corner threw in the towel that night, however, you couldn't pick their fighter out of a lineup, so altered were his features.

This was to be Chavez's coming-out party as a major force in boxing. He was an artist painting in swaths of red, cutting Rosario to ribbons as he worked. It was this fight that would launch his rise through the pantheon of Mexican fighters until he was seen as a boxer without peer.

Chavez was so dominant from the opening bell until the moment Rosario's trainer, Lalo Medina, lobbed in the white towel of surrender at 2:36 of the 11th round that he could no longer be viewed as just one of many talented Mexican fighters. Chavez clearly was superior, and proving that point came at the expense of a battle-tested champion.

There is a long and violent history between Mexican fighters and those born in Puerto Rico, but no one is quite sure when this rivalry began. Some cite the 1981 fight between Mexican legend Salvador Sanchez and Puerto Rico's Wilfredo Gomez as the moment things became personal between fighters of those two countries, because each was a massive star in his homeland and both were world champions, Sanchez holding the WBC featherweight title and Gomez the junior featherweight belt.

The crowd that night at Caesars Palace was unusually raucous and evenly divided, flags waving all around the stands as dueling musicians sang at their highest possible decibel levels. Perhaps the seeds of what has become a classic cultural rivalry began then. Or maybe it was much earlier; maybe it all started in Montreal the night Puerto Rico's Sixto Escobar knocked out Mexican Rudolfo "Baby" Casanova to claim a version of the bantamweight title in 1934 and the whole island declared a national holiday to celebrate his homecoming.

Regardless of its origins, by the time Chavez and Rosario squared off, the Mexican-Puerto Rican rivalry was deeply entrenched in the sport, and its intensity spilled out from the first time the two met to hype the promotion. They had traded barbs on several occasions, but the animus between them took a startling turn when Rosario, at a pre-fight press conference in Los Angeles nine days before the fight, hollered at Chavez, "I will send you back to Mexico in a box, you coward!"

The 25-year-old Chavez snapped, lunging at Rosario and shouting, "Right now! We'll find out who is a coward!"

Cooler heads prevailed, separating the two before things got totally out of hand, but it was obvious this was no pre-planned effort to sell tickets. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Later, Rosario would express astonishment at his opponent's overheated response to his words, telling a small group of reporters, "I didn't know he was taking it all seriously."

As it turned out, Chavez took everything seriously when it came to boxing, including remarks he felt challenged his manhood.

"The Puerto Ricans talk too much," he said after being led away. "They're always boasting, always saying, 'I'm going to crush you, I'm going to knock you out,' but they can't back it up.

"When it started, it was OK, but Rosario has a big mouth and the people around him have got big mouths. He went too far. When a man calls me what he called me, that's when the fight starts. To hell with the money! I had 200 fights in the street for nothing! What is one more fight for nothing?"

That set the stage for what would become a brutal, one-sided beatdown born out of Chavez's recognition that the best way to neutralize Rosario's concussive power was to not run from it. Before the fight, Chavez told HBO's broadcast team, "I respect his punching power. You can't give Rosario room to work." As the night unfolded, Chavez did not give him room to breathe, let alone work.

True to his word, Chavez opened the fight by crowding Rosario at every opportunity, forcing him to the ropes or back into the turnbuckle, where he launched what would become a six-round demolition job on the champion's body. Every time Rosario tried to escape, the surprisingly strong Chavez would use his arms, elbows and fists to pin his back to the ropes and wail away at his ribcage. Rosario took the punishment, but not without paying a growing price as the rounds wore on and the pattern remained unchanged.

Not only did Chavez's plan put him in position to slow Rosario down and eventually open his head up as a target, it also negated Rosario's presumed power advantage. At such close quarters, Chavez smothered Rosario's punches, taking away his leverage and his ability to inflict the kind of damage that would force Chavez to second guess himself.

Chavez may have technically been the smaller man, but it was apparent by late in the first round that he was stronger than the champion when Rosario tried to twist Chavez around so he could escape one of his onslaughts but could not move him and was wrestled back into the ropes. When the bell sounded to end the round, Rosario glared at Chavez and the challenger walked toward him, clearly unintimidated.

Just before the bell sounded to begin Round 4, Rosario's fellow Puerto Rican Hector "Macho" Camacho, sensing trouble was already mounting for Rosario, ran toward his corner hollering, "Box, Chapo! Box!"

It was good advice, but Chavez came out and proved to be the more skillful boxer as well as the stronger puncher, landing 47 of the 71 punches he threw that round, according to CompuBox statistics. That's a connect rate of 66 percent and a serious problem for anyone trying to find a way to box effectively enough to get this whirlwind off of him.

By midway through Round 5, Rosario's left eye had begun to swell, and not even a toe-to-toe exchange in the sixth round was enough to discourage Chavez for long, even though Rosario finally landed several flush shots. They were the kind of punches that had stopped a multitude of opponents, but Chavez's chin seemed made out of titanium. It would not crack.

After a seven-round assault primarily directed at Rosario's body, Chavez exploded punches off the champion's head in Round 8, at one point sending Rosario's mouthpiece spinning through the air as blood spewed from his mouth. The deep cut he'd sustained inside his mouth, coupled with his left eye having begun to shut like Venetian blinds, put Rosario in an increasingly hopeless position. His defenses had been totally breached by Chavez and his vaunted punching power meant nothing, because he could not establish the proper distance necessary to land

anything effective.

Chavez had proven to be not only a relentless body puncher but also an intelligent tactician and a skilled technician adept at cutting off the ring in ways that negated the speed advantage Rosario possessed. One can be as fleet of foot as one wants, but if there is no escape route to get your back off the ropes, your feet cannot help you and your problems figure to mount. So it became for Rosario.

Rosario had already been stunned in Round 8 and staggered at the end of Round 9 before Chavez hurt him badly with just over a minute to go in the 10th round. It was a crushing left to the head that wobbled Rosario, followed by a stream of right hands he could not see because his left eye was now closed as tightly as a window in the wintertime.

Between rounds, ring physician Dr. Flip Homansky asked Rosario's corner about the fighter's condition. Twice, Medina said, "He's OK! He's OK!" By then, Rosario was many things, but he was not OK.

Still, he bravely stumbled out to face Chavez again in Round 11, a circumstance that never should have been allowed, either by the doctor or Medina, because the fighter knew his situation was hopeless and so did the 8,500 fans jammed into the arena.

Immediately Chavez again forced Rosario's back against the ropes and pounded him to the body as if he was working on a dangling 135-pound heavy bag, which for all intents and purposes is exactly what the now-blinded Rosario had become.

Chavez strafed him with a stinging right cross to the jaw and followed with clubbing lefts to the body that had Rosario reeling. Another big right hand sent Rosario's bloody mouthpiece flying across the ring again, and that, finally, was enough.

With referee Richard Steele watching closely but making no move to stop the fight, Medina flung in the towel, which hit Steele in the back. It was as if Medina was tapping Steele on the shoulder and asking, "What are you waiting for?"

Steele waited no longer, jumping between the fighters and ending what had become a merciless mugging with 22 seconds left in the round. As Rosario slumped down on his stool with one eye closed, the other barely a slit and his nose and mouth both leaking blood onto the canvas, an unmarked Chavez threw his hands in the air and climbed up on the turnbuckle, a king ascending his throne.

"This man is going to be so very difficult to beat," HBO analyst Sugar Ray Leonard said at that moment on the telecast. Leonard didn't know how right he was.

Chavez would go on to win 31 more fights before finally tasting his first defeat, the longest consecutive winning streak to start a career in boxing history. That streak spanned 13 years and 87 fights, and by the time it ended, Chavez had, in the opinion of most historians, passed the great Mexican fighters like Sanchez, Ruben Olivares and Carlos Zarate to become the standard by which all future Mexican fighters would be measured. By the time he retired, Chavez would have a record of 107-6-2 with 86 knockouts, 37 title fights and at one point 27 title defenses (over three weight classes).

His rise to dominance began that night under the stars in Las Vegas when, according to CompuBox records, he landed a remarkable 450 of 743 punches, a connect rate of 60.5 percent, and a lethal 73 of 91 thrown in the final round. He had outlanded Rosario by nearly 200 punches, effectively eviscerating a champion who would come back to win eight straight fights and 10 of his next 11, as well as world titles at both lightweight and junior welterweight. Only 24 at the time he faced Chavez, Rosario was not some shot champion on his last legs.

A few days after the fight, Sports Illustrated's headline on their fight account read: "Time To Hail Cesar: WBA lightweight champion Cesar Chavez of Mexico may be the world's best fighter."

Time would prove that to be true, and this was the night Julio Cesar Chavez first revealed to the world that he was an artist in gloved fists, so talented that after the fight, Luis Spada, who managed the WBA's No. 1 contender, Rodolfo Aguilar, was asked if they wanted to challenge for the title and responded in a telling way.

"No, thank you," Spada told Sports Illustrated. "There's no way I'm going to put my kid in with that Chavez. I don't want to ruin his career. No title fight in the world is worth facing someone like that."

Five months later, however, Spada had no choice and his fighter had no chance. Aguilar was knocked down in the first round and stopped in the sixth by a fighter now universally seen as the best pound-for-pound boxer on the planet and Mexico's finest fistic export.

Many years later and now well into retirement, Chavez was asked by The Ring to name his greatest moment, and despite all his major victories, he did not hesitate.

"I had a lot of great fights where at the end of the night I made it look easy, but if we're going to look at one fight that shot me to another level, it was the Edwin Rosario fight," Chavez said.

Few would quarrel with that. In fact, when trainer Abel Sanchez was bringing along future middleweight champion Gennadiy Golovkin, he had him watch that fight numerous times. In Sanchez's mind, it was a perfect performance against a high-quality opponent, a textbook written in blood on how to fight on the inside until you've beaten the will out of someone and then a master class in how to close the show.

Julio Cesar Chavez did that on many occasions in his career, but never did he do it better than the night he dismantled Edwin Rosario and etched his name atop the proud history of Mexican boxing.

THE INFAMOUS **CHAVEZ-TAYLOR** STOPPAGE LEFT AN INDELIBLE MARK ON BOTH FIGHTERS' CAREERS AND INSPIRES VEHEMENT DEBATE TO THIS DAY

By **Dan Rafael**

TWO SECONDS

Thirty-one years later, the junior welterweight unification showdown between Julio Cesar Chavez and Meldrick Taylor stands the test of time as an all-time great fight and one that concluded with perhaps the single most controversial stoppage in ring history. Just say "two seconds" to any boxing fan and they'll likely understand.

But it also ranks among the greatest comebacks ever. Chavez rescued sure defeat in the final moments for the most iconic victory of a glorious 25-year career in which he won titles in three divisions and became a pound-for-pound legend, the idol of Mexican fans and a top-tier Hall of Famer.

Conversely, it was the most bitter of defeats for Taylor, who dominated most of the fight and was on his feet after getting dropped in the final seconds when referee Richard Steele waved it off at 2:58, denying him a legacy-making victory.

It was a 12th-round stoppage so controversial that it still ignites fierce debate more than three decades later.

"It's an unfair stoppage, and I have always thought it was an unfair and illogical stoppage," said Jim Lampley, the longtime HBO broadcaster, who called the fight from ringside. "Two seconds left. What damage is going to be done to him in the remaining two seconds?

"It was an illogical stoppage and it robbed Taylor of the chance of going to the scorecards on the night on which he had fought the fight of his life. And if they go to the scorecards, we know the outcome. He had won the fight. So I've always thought it was an unfair and illogical stoppage."

On the other hand ...

"I was in the minority that thought it was a good stoppage. I didn't have a problem with the stoppage," said veteran boxing writer Ron Borges, who covered the fight at ringside for the Boston Globe.

What nobody debates is how great the fight was, how it cemented Chavez's star power and how it ruined Taylor.

"The ending was so dramatic and the level of both guys was so high that when you add those two together, it's a night you don't forget. It was a movie," Borges said. "That's what happens in the movies. That doesn't happen in real life. You want to talk about a myth-making event? That was it."

The boxing world was still buzzing from what occurred only a month earlier – Buster Douglas' monumental upset of Mike Tyson to win the undisputed heavyweight championship – when Chavez and Taylor met March 17, 1990, at the Las Vegas Hilton in a heavily anticipated showdown that was so outstanding it was picked as the 1990 Ring Fight of the Year and Fight of the Decade. It was as memorable as Chavez's one-sided knockout of Taylor in a rematch four-and-a-half years later was forgettable.

Their first fight had what fans crave: undefeated champions at the top of their games with exciting but contrasting styles – the fight was titled "Thunder and Lightning" – with a little nationalism thrown in for good measure. The Don King-promoted Chavez, the Mexican superstar with a nation behind him, was the thunder, a relentless, break-you-down thumper who beat and battered opponents into submission with a pressure attack. The Main Events-promoted Taylor was the lightning, a 1984 Olympic gold medalist and flashy Philadelphia fighter with tremendous speed who threw punches with the rapidity of a machine gun.

The 27-year-old Chavez was 68-0 with 55 knockouts and a slight favorite against the 23-year-old Taylor, who was 24-0-1 with 14 knockouts.

"We weren't worried about taking the fight, but I was concerned about the fight as a fight," said Shelly Finkel, who co-managed Taylor with Lou Duva. "I thought, 'This is a tough fight. I'm not deluding myself.'"

Taylor, however, started fast, banked the early rounds and made it look easy. He was boxing circles around Chavez, and, although he wasn't a big puncher, he was outlanding him and peppering Chavez with combinations.

"I was there at the Chavez-(Edwin) Rosario fight and saw Chavez beat him and one guy after another, and I said, 'This is gonna be a hard guy to beat,'" Finkel said. "And then as the fight was going on, I said, 'Meldrick's gonna win.'"

Despite the deficit, Chavez, as usual, never stopped attacking. Although Taylor continued to win rounds, it wasn't easy. Chavez was losing but doing damage, and if he was going to lose, Taylor was damn well going to know he'd been in the fight of his life. To many, Taylor won the first nine rounds.

"As the fight was going along, most people were so impressed by Meldrick, you almost didn't notice Chavez," Borges said. "He was so smooth and fast and so dominating; you almost didn't notice that Chavez was doing more damage than it appeared. My sense was Meldrick was winning the battle of rounds but he was losing the war."

Entering the championship rounds, the damage Chavez was doing was clear. Taylor's face was swelling – turned out he had a facial fracture – and he was bleeding from his mouth.

"You began to see Meldrick's face is different," Borges said. "You can see he's really taking more abuse than I thought. I won't say [the arena] was quiet, but people were taken aback that Chavez was in trouble. His fans realized he was in trouble. Then when he started to rally, the place went insane."

Slowly but surely, Chavez was breaking Taylor down, but he would need a knockout to win. It became a game of beating the clock. If Taylor could make it to the final bell, he'd win.

"It's a tremendous fight, and partially because you are watching a highly skilled, physically gifted young fighter who is probably at that moment at his absolute physical peak fighting very clearly the best eight, nine rounds of his career, and it was impossible to imagine anyone going in and doing better against Chavez," Lampley said. "It was an incredibly effective performance.

"Now, it's not at all unusual or hard to understand that Meldrick tired, and as he tired, he lost some of that speed and mobility. And Chavez, who was an incredibly determined guy and who was durable and who had supernatural will, started coming on in a physically damaging way, landing body shots, landing with thudding power – and interestingly, a lifelong left-hooker doing significant damage in the last few rounds with straight right hands. It's Chavez's right hand that gets Meldrick in trouble."

Round 12 arrived and Taylor was ahead 108-101 and 107-102 on two scorecards and surprisingly trailing 105-104 on the third. However, rather than play it safe, Taylor's trainers, Duva and George Benton, both told him he needed the round, and Taylor went out to fight and paid the price, finally getting nailed with a right hand that floored him in a corner with a few seconds left.

Taylor rose and looked right at Steele, who twice asked him if he was OK. But the referee got no response as Taylor glanced to his right, distracted by the sight of Duva jumping on the ring apron. Steele waved his hands to halt the fight, leaving many in disbelief as Chavez and his fans celebrated. Lampley, on the broadcast, recognized how shocking it was and exclaimed, "This is one of the most unusual calls by a referee in the whole history of the sport!"

"He got dropped," Finkel said. "I said as long as he gets up, he's gonna win. I saw the [flashing 10-second] light and also I saw that Steele never moved Chavez back to the neutral corner. So I see Lou, thinking the fight is over, jumping up [into the ring] and I said, 'No! Don't!' to myself, 'or you're gonna get a disqualification.'But at that point, Steele called it off. I said, 'How could he do that?' How could he either not put Chavez in the neutral corner or not know there was less than 10 seconds? We were devastated. Two seconds left? You won the fight and he took it away."

Ronnie Shields, who was Taylor's assistant trainer for a decade and in the corner on fight night, also strongly disagreed with the stoppage.

"I didn't think that the stoppage was appropriate. I thought Richard was one of the more experienced referees, so he knew how much time was left, and I think he knew that all he had to do was say, 'Box,' and then the bell would have rang anyway. He saw the flashing lights. You had to be a blind man not to see that. Everybody in the arena saw it."

At the time, Nevada used a flashing light on each corner post to indicate 10 seconds remaining in a round. Taylor was standing in a corner and the lights were flashing directly behind him as Steele looked at him following the knockdown.

Borges didn't buy it then or now that Steele should know the time remaining.

"Number one, Lou came up on the apron, so they could have

DQ'd [Taylor] if they wanted to," Borges said. "Secondly, if you watch Meldrick, he's distracted a little bit by Lou when he looks to his right. But if you're Steele, you've seen the beating this guy is taking and you don't have time to make that determination. This guy was in big trouble. He was swaying like he was on the deck of the Titanic.

"There was definitely a distraction from Lou, but if you're Steele, he asked Meldrick, 'Are you OK?' And he got no response. You can't send the guy back out. Steele, to me, handled it the right way. He got right in front of Meldrick's face to give him every chance to say he was OK or at least nod, something. No response.

"To me, the referee's job is not to be looking at that flashing light. It's to be looking into the eyes of that fighter. I think he knew it was almost over, but I also think he knew how much trouble the guy was in. The referee doesn't necessarily know if there's nine seconds left or two seconds. From my heart, yeah, Meldrick deserved the win. He boxed brilliantly. But my head says he went to the hospital with internal bleeding and was never the same fighter ever again."

As dramatic a comeback as it was for Chavez, it was hard for Team Taylor to take, particularly because it was Duva who may have cost him the victory when he got on the ring apron as Taylor rose from the knockdown, distracting the fighter as Steele assessed his condition.

"The first thing I think about [is] Lou jumping up on the ring and George Benton and I trying to grab Lou and pull him back down in the 12th round," Shields said. "Lou thought the bell rang, and the bell didn't ring. Richard Steele was giving Meldrick an eight-count, and [Meldrick] took his eyes off of him and was looking at Lou because Lou was in the ring. He distracted Meldrick, and that's why Richard Steele stopped the fight.

"After looking at everything, it all points back to our corner because Lou distracted Meldrick when Richard Steele was asking him, 'Are you OK?' Lou distracted him, and in Meldrick's mind, talking to him after the fight, he said, 'Well, I heard him asking me if I was OK, but then I looked and saw Lou jumping in the ring, so I thought the fight was over with.' So, to him, it didn't make a difference whether he was talking to Richard Steele or not.

"The corner is to blame for the loss. Absolutely. The corner is definitely to blame for the loss. It wasn't Meldrick's fault. He was distracted by his own corner. We lost the fight for him. Simple as that. [Meldrick] thinks the fight is over with because he sees his man up on the ring. It should have been a DQ, but Richard Steele didn't even see Lou. He stopped it because Meldrick wasn't responding back to him. It's the corner's fault for distracting our own fighter."

Lampley agreed with Shields.

"It wasn't over and [Duva] got his fighter to turn away from the referee and look at him at a moment when the referee was asking the fighter a question, and the answer was going to be his motivation whether or not to stop the fight," Lampley said. "You can certainly make a strong case that at the single moment that mattered most, Duva injected himself into the conversation in a very negative and counterproductive way."

While Chavez celebrated his unlikely victory, Shields said it was a much different scene in Taylor's dressing room before he was taken to the hospital to have his facial fracture examined and to be treated for internal bleeding.

"Everybody was pissed at Lou because Lou jumped up on the ring," Shields said. "Everybody was so pissed. Meldrick was really mad. He was like, 'I thought the bell rang because Lou jumped up and was getting into the ring.' I was pissed at it, and I guess I'll always be pissed at it for Meldrick, because Meldrick trained so hard for that fight and we all knew he was winning. Every time I see Chavez, I think about it. Every time I see something about Meldrick, I think about it."

Chavez would go unbeaten for another 21 consecutive fights, many of which were huge events, until a 1994 split decision loss to Frankie Randall. But no victory was bigger than the first one against Taylor.

"I think for Chavez, it sort of cemented for those few doubters who wanted to argue for Salvador Sanchez or Ruben Olivares as the greatest Mexican fighter," Borges said. "This fight I thought cemented his claim, legitimized his claim, to being the greatest Mexican fighter, because not only did he come back from nowhere to win the classic quote-unquote 'Mexican fighter thing,' where you're losing rounds, you're getting outboxed, but you're pounding the guy's body and landing shots that are coming with a lot of pain behind them, and at the last second you chop him down. It was the stuff of legend. It really was. Legends get created off of nights like that.

"In my mind, that made Chavez. Everybody knew he was a great fighter, but that was the fight."

As disappointing as the loss was, Chavez has Shields' eternal respect.

"There was no quit in him. He had faith in himself that he was going to catch Meldrick," Shields said. "He couldn't catch Meldrick early, so that's why he lost all the early rounds. Later on, he started hitting him with one punch, then two punches, then three punches. And then he finally caught up with him. He was going to fight all the way to the end, and he did."

Taylor's career was never the same. Yes, he rebounded to win his next five fights, including a welterweight title bout against then-unbeaten Aaron Davis in 1991, but Shields sensed he was different.

"Win or lose, you still take the same damage, but the attitude, the mindset, is different," Shields said. "It's different when you win than when you lose and get discouraged. If he had won, trust me, he probably would have been still better. But [the loss] affected him a lot because it was a fight where he did take punishment in the later part of that fight, and I think it really hurt him bad, but it hurt his pride more than anything that he lost that fight."

Finkel concurred that the loss broke Taylor's spirit, mainly because he couldn't secure an immediate rematch.

"They wouldn't give us the rematch right away, and that called for a rematch if any fight did," Finkel said. "By the time Meldrick got one, he was gone. The result devastated him emotionally."

But for two seconds, perhaps Taylor's career would have taken a different arc.

"It would have been a superstar-making performance, because Meldrick was a star coming in but not a superstar," Lampley said. "He didn't have that kind of a win on his resume yet. Chavez was a superstar. Meldrick's in position to beat a superstar fighting the fight of his life, and it all slips away.

"Winning doesn't change Chavez's career. The person whose career changed that night was Meldrick's. If Chavez lost, if Steele doesn't stop it, that doesn't diminish Chavez's superstar status, because he's lost to a tremendously gifted fighter raising his game and, obviously, fighting the fight of his life. There would have been a more meaningful rematch.

FROM THE ALAMO TO ESTADIO AZTECA

CHAVEZ'S DESTRUCTION OF **GREG HAUGEN** SET THE BOXING ATTENDANCE RECORD, BUT THE FIGHT, WHICH PITTED A MEXICAN HERO VS. A BRASH AMERICAN IN MEXICO CITY, WAS MORE THAN A SPORTING EVENT

By **Nigel Collins**

It's been almost three decades since the Fellini-esque fiesta that was the Julio Cesar Chavez-Greg Haugen fight. Looking back is like searching for your high school yearbook in a cluttered attic. You'll find it eventually, but not where you thought your mom stashed it.

We all know the basics: Chavez kicked Haugen's butt almost all the way back to Alaska in front of a feverish crowd of more than 132,000 fans, the largest paid attendance for boxing ever, a distinction it still holds.

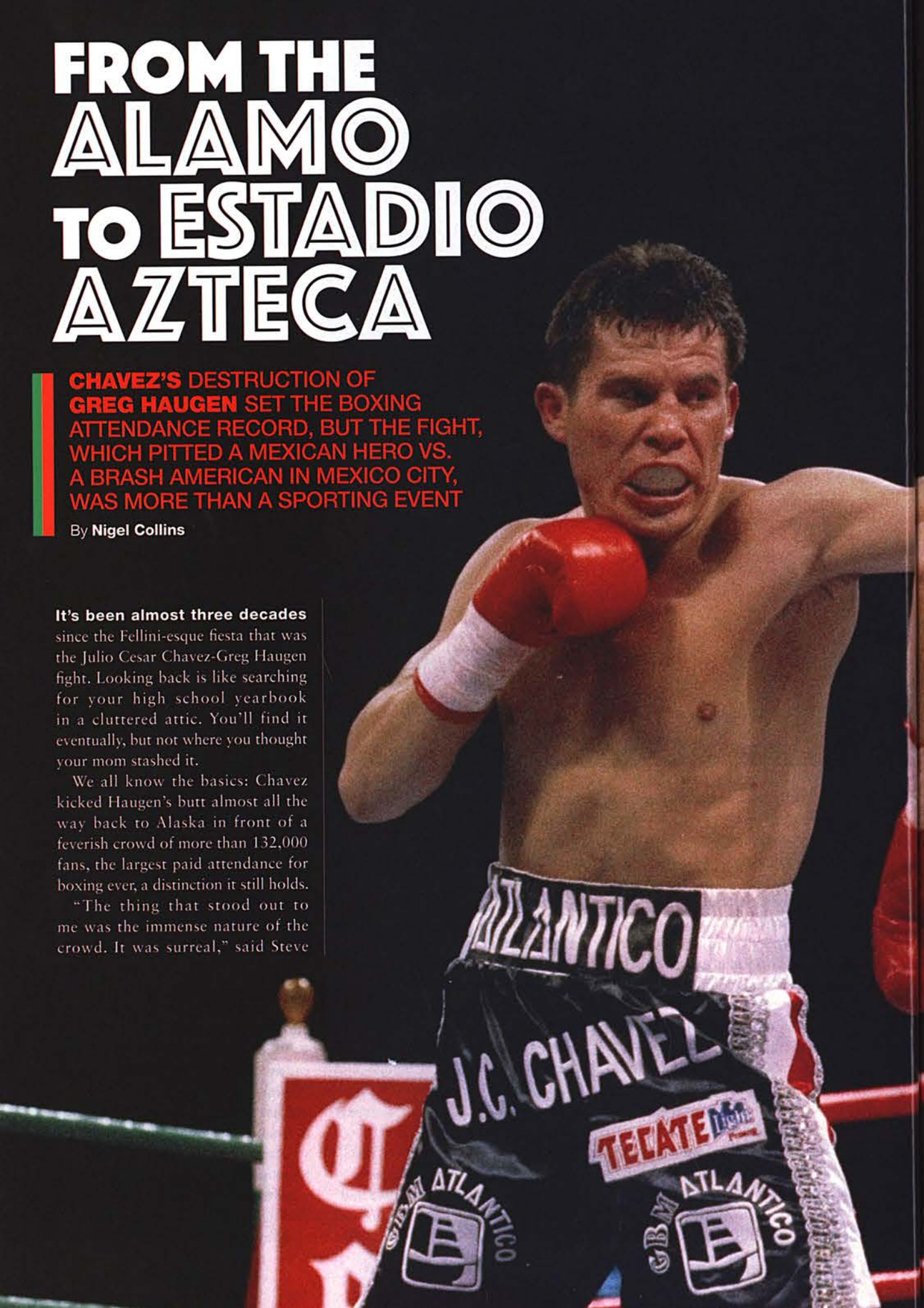
"The thing that stood out to me was the immense nature of the crowd. It was surreal," said Steve Albert, blow-by-blow man for Showtime's pay-per-view broadcast. "I remember looking around and wondering how the people in the top rows could see what's going on. The boxers had to look like specks, like little ants."

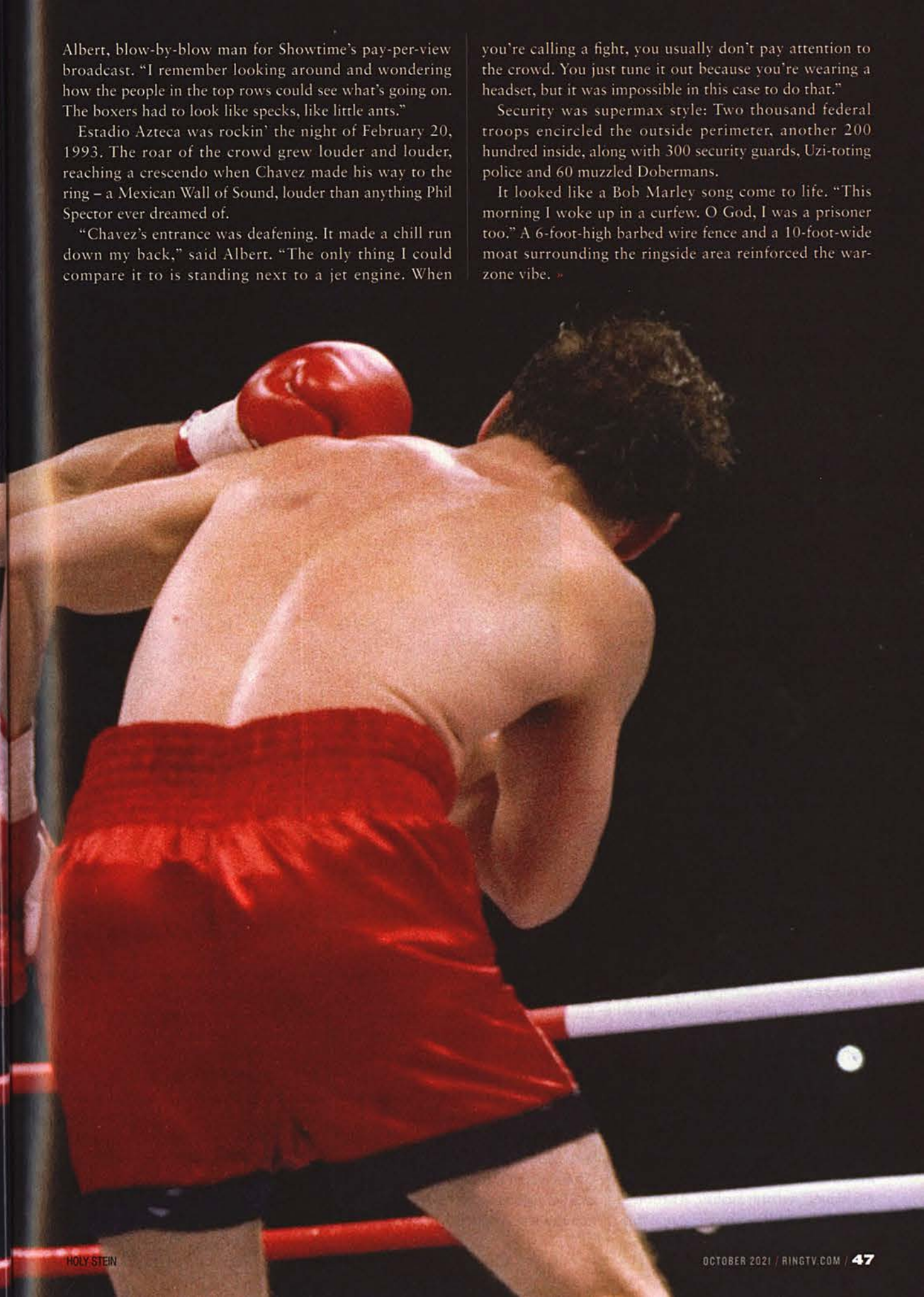
Estadio Azteca was rockin' the night of February 20, 1993. The roar of the crowd grew louder and louder, reaching a crescendo when Chavez made his way to the ring – a Mexican Wall of Sound, louder than anything Phil Spector ever dreamed of.

"Chavez's entrance was deafening. It made a chill run down my back," said Albert. "The only thing I could compare it to is standing next to a jet engine. When you're calling a fight, you usually don't pay attention to the crowd. You just tune it out because you're wearing a headset, but it was impossible in this case to do that."

Security was supermax style: Two thousand federal troops encircled the outside perimeter, another 200 hundred inside, along with 300 security guards, Uzi-toting police and 60 muzzled Dobermans.

It looked like a Bob Marley song come to life. "This morning I woke up in a curfew. O God, I was a prisoner too." A 6-foot-high barbed wire fence and a 10-foot-wide moat surrounding the ringside area reinforced the war-zone vibe. »





HOLY STEIN

What were they so worried about? Practically every heart in the stadium beat for Chavez. There was no way he was going to lose to Haugen. Was such a show of force really necessary?

"It further separated the societal hierarchy," wrote Roberto Jose Andrade Franco in Ringside Seat.

Sounds about right. Fat cats seated inside the enclosure paid roughly $800 per ticket, while the proletariat off in the distance could get in for as little as $1.65. You got a much better view of the fight for $800, but the $1.65 crowd probably had more fun.

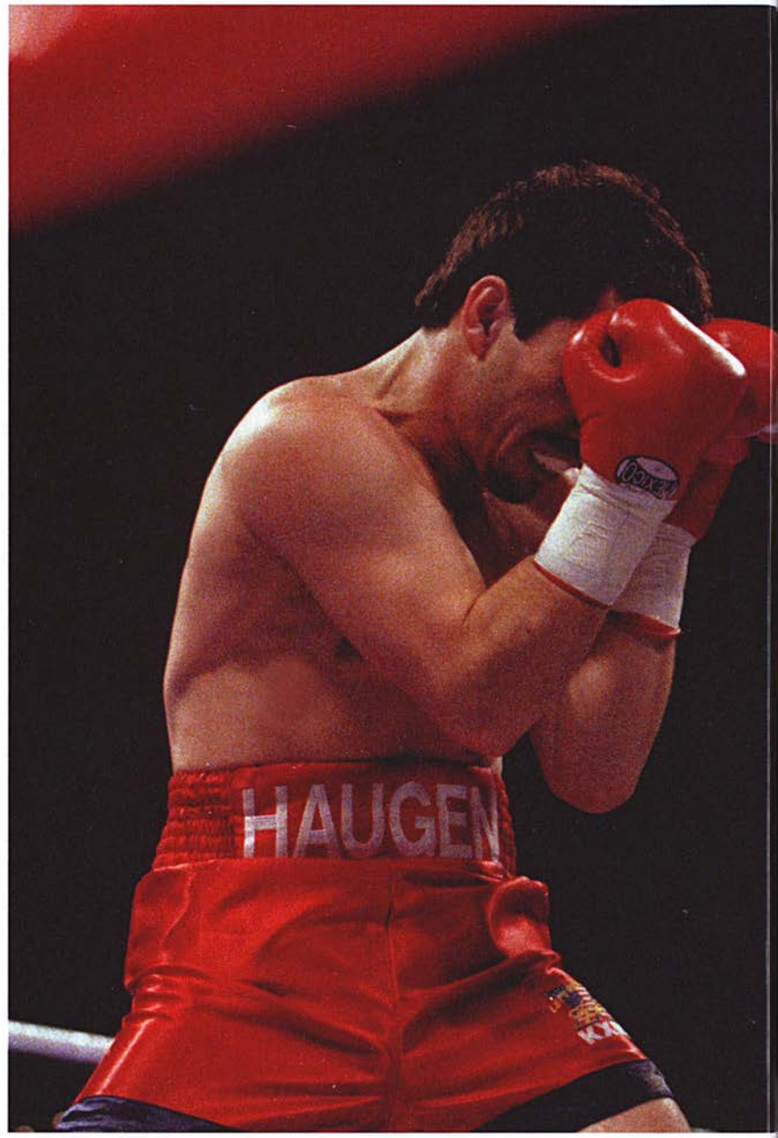
Chavez's record at the time was 84-0 (69 KOs), an incredible run that began with his pro debut on February 5, 1980. During the streak, Chavez won titles in three divisions – junior lightweight, lightweight and junior welterweight. His list of victims included Meldrick Taylor, Edwin Rosario, Juan Laporte, Rocky Lockridge, Hector Camacho, Jose Luis Ramirez and Roger Mayweather.

Chavez was everything Mexican fans wanted in a fighter – a skillful badass with an iron jaw and a meat hook of a left hook. He could grind down his man, put him away with one or two clean shots, or outbox those who could last the distance with him. Above all, he was a winner, a hero whose victories were his people's victories. Whenever he fought, they all had a tiny piece of him in their hearts.

"He was a deity in Mexico," Hall of Fame boxing writer Bert Sugar said of Chavez. "His fan base was massive. They loved him and he loved them. He had what the Latinos call machismo. God, did he have it. He exuded it."

If Chavez was boxing royalty, Haugen was, as his father called him, the "Mutt," a scrappy underdog who wouldn't back down, regardless of who was in the other corner.

"Greg participated in toughman fights ... along the Alaskan circuit where patrons are famished for alcohol and good old fashion violence," wrote author Anthony "Zute" George in *Tough Man: The Greg Haugen Story*.



"Everyone thought I learned how to fight in toughman fights in Alaska," said Haugen, who regularly bowled over liquored-up civilians of all sizes for $50 a pop. "Most people don't realize I had over 300 amateur fights."

Haugen, 32, had always loved to fight. It was what he was good at, and he compensated for his average punching power with ring smarts and a dumpster-load of grit. He was 32-4 (16 KOs) going into the Chavez fight, including two stints as IBF lightweight titleholder and a brief spell as the WBO junior welterweight beltholder.

He was a natural trash talker and quick wit. This talent was the hot sauce that spiced the pre-fight ballyhoo to such an extent that Haugen took a worse beating than he would have had he kept his mouth shut. But what's the fun in that?

A case can be made that Haugen's seminal "Tijuana taxicab driver" wisecrack (aimed at Chavez's supposedly "inflated" record) is remembered more than the fight or the size of the crowd. The term has become a part of the lexicon, a standard putdown directed at outclassed operators in any field, except driving a taxicab in Tijuana.

Although Haugen claimed Don King made up some of the nasty things the promoter attributed to him, he didn't deny saying Chavez was "sparring with girls with dresses on" or "There aren't 130,000 Mexicans who could afford a ticket to the fight" in reply to a question about being unnerved by the size of the pro-Chavez crowd.

When Haugen starts running his mouth, he's like Triumph The Insult Comic Dog, raw and unfiltered. Some found his putdowns hilarious, but the "Lion of Culiacan" wasn't one of them.

"I really hate him bad. When he looks at me, I want to vomit," Chavez said. "I am going to give him the worst beating of his life; I am going to make him swallow the words that came out of his dirty mouth."

You could sense the testosterone in the air when Chavez ducked between the ropes. His body was tight and his eyes bright under the lights. He was the centerpiece of an event that was both a prizefight and a celebration, with acres of cheap seats filled by the working poor cheering their heads off. There was room for everybody, including approximately 800,000 pay-per-view customers.

With the pageantry of ring walks over, national anthems sung and introductions made, the bell rang and the carnage began.

A right to the face greeted Haugen in the first round and knocked him back a few feet, and then came the second right, the one that knocked him to his knees. He popped up almost as quickly as he went down and even managed to clip Chavez with a left hook near the end of the round. Outgunned and outclassed, the bar fighter still felt he might have a chance.

Chavez soon found his groove, pressing forward, alternating his attack between the body and head. Haugen realized his flicking jab and movement were not going to keep Chavez away. His only chance to survive was to put his head on Chavez's chest and bang away the best he could, when he could.

Chavez was unstoppable. The way he lowered his shoulder and bent at the waist to generate maximum torque on his hook was a thing of beauty. All Haugen could do was wince, grit his teeth and get ready to absorb the next one.

Whenever he got a chance, Haugen countered, sometimes throwing four or five quick punches at a time. Chavez was unfazed and went about his work like nothing had happened. In between slamming cannonballs into his adversary's flanks, he abused Haugen about the head with an assortment of blows.

At the end of the fourth round, a glum-looking Haugen sat on his stool and stared straight ahead, ignoring whatever his handlers were saying. He was almost completely spent, his face was lumped up and his insides were on fire. It was almost over and everybody knew it.

Haugen was knocked down again in the fifth and faded into the ropes after beating the count, where a follow-up barrage forced referee Joe Cortez to terminate the match at the 2:02 mark. It was the first time in 37 pro fights Haugen had been stopped.

The fight has become a touchstone, a massive event where the hero gave the loudmouth villain his comeuppance. Still, even a celebrated chestnut such as the "Grand Slam Of Boxing" (nobody except Don King called it that) deserves to have its coals stirred.

There is a bigger story that encompassed the Chavez-Haugen bout, without which it would have been just another fight. The history of tensions between Mexico and the United States is long and bitter, and still lies heavy on the southern country's psyche. Forget the movies you've seen about the Alamo. It was not a glorious stand to protect Texas; it was a fight to make Texas a slave state. Slavery was illegal in Mexico.

President James K. Polk was narrowly elected on a platform of expanding U.S. territory in Oregon and Texas that led to the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). Much like today, the country was divided – some were against invading Mexico and others were all for it. Among those opposed to Polk's imperialistic policy were Abraham Lincoln (then in the House of Representatives), abolitionist Frederick Douglass, and writers Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Even Ulysses S. Grant thought it was a rotten idea.

But as they usually do, the warmongers and profiteers won, hiding their greed behind manifest destiny, the widely held cultural belief in the 19th century that the United States is destined by God to expand its dominion.

"The United States annexed Texas, which led to the U.S.-Mexico War," said Roberto Jose Andrade Franco. "At that time, there were politicians that wanted to take all of Mexico, the aptly called 'All of Mexico Movement.' They settled, if that's the right word, for what amounted to half of Mexico's land. Since then, there's been land disputes from the U.S. violating the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This is the societal, emotional, metaphysical,

THE UNDERCARD

Gabriel Ruelas had won 33 of 34 pro fights when he climbed into the ring at Estadio Azteca to challenge WBC junior lightweight titleholder **Azumah Nelson** in the second match of the Chavez-Haugen pay-per-view broadcast. Even the one loss was a fluke, when Ruelas suffered a serious elbow injury fighting Jeff Franklin in April 1990.

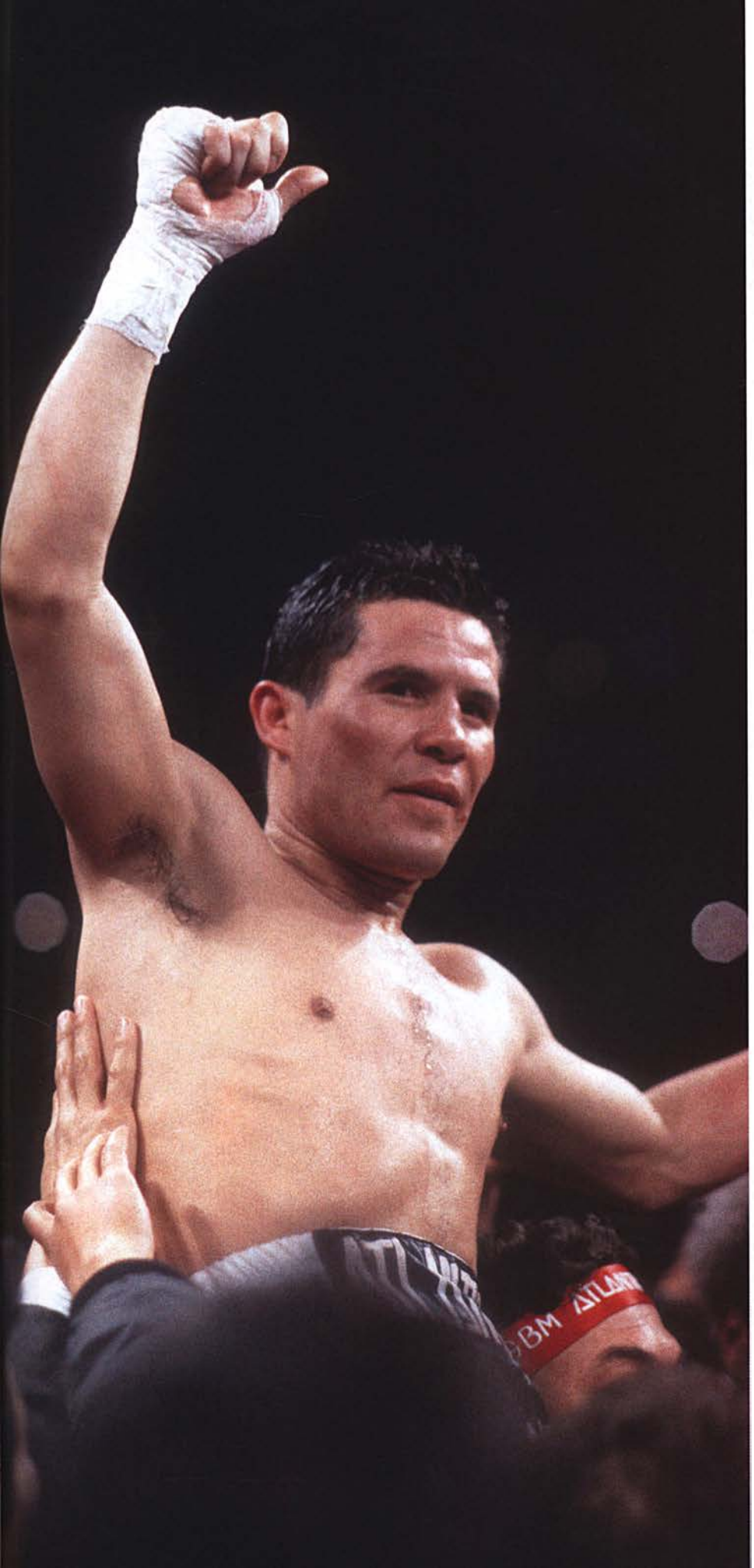
Even though his knockout of Jeff Fenech in The Ring's 1992 Upset of the Year was only two fights prior, Nelson was beginning to show signs of his age. A pro since 1979, he was fighting his 17th title fight. While it was the most competitive of the three-bout undercard, it was not particularly enthralling. It was close, but neither man landed their best punches.

Scores of 115-113 and 115-114 for Nelson and 115-115 seemed fairly reasonable, but Ruelas was furious.

"Are you kidding me?" he asked. "I won most of those rounds. It was the easiest fight of my career. His best shots were his head butts."

In the main supporting bout, WBC junior middleweight titleholder **Terry Norris** made quick work of reigning IBF welterweight beltholder **Maurice Blocker**, flooring him twice in the opening round. When Norris sent Blocker stumbling into the ropes early in the second, referee Richard Steele stopped the fight 29 seconds into the round.

In another one-sided bout, WBA super middleweight beltholder **Michael Nunn**, looking for a rematch with James Toney, knocked out mismatched **Dan Morgan** with one second remaining in the first round of the pay-per-view opening bout.



historical context in which Chavez exists, not to mention all the other bullshit going on in Mexico.

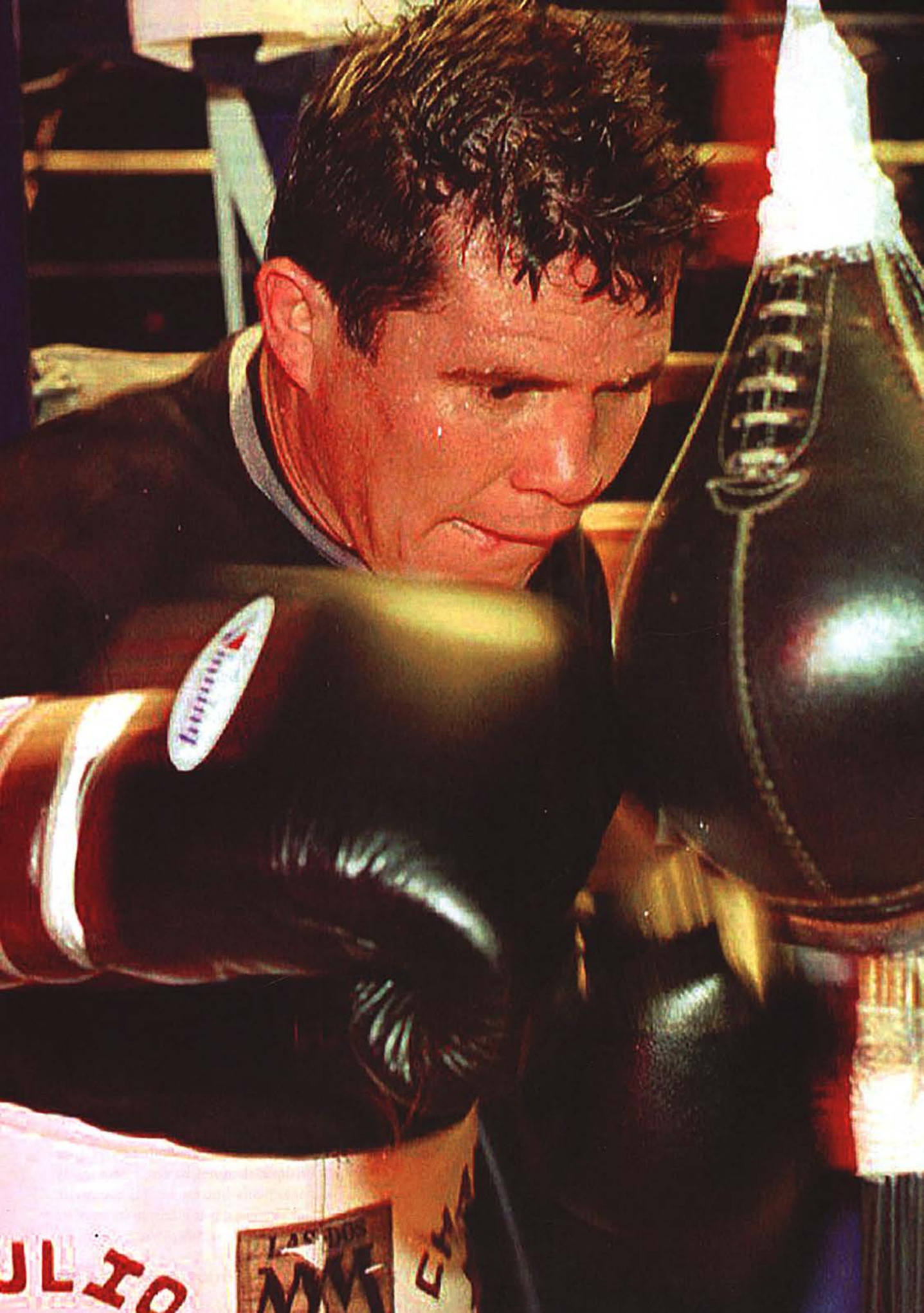
"So, when this 5-foot-6, 140-pound Mexican guy is just pummeling people, and because of where boxers come from, working-class Mexicans have a hero that hasn't really existed outside of fiction in probably generations. Not since the Mexican Revolution with Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, two figures that are still very much a part of Mexican identity. When Haugen comes, playing the all-too-familiar role of the Ugly American, the fight becomes a metaphor for U.S.-Mexico tension that's been there since the United States-Mexico War.

"When Chavez beat the shit out of Haugen – poor Greg, he thought this was about boxing and little more – it certainly didn't make up for all that happened between Mexico and the United States. But for five rounds, it was the reverse of the usual script."

In his third bout following the Haugen fight, Chavez fought a scandalous draw with Pernell Whitaker that should have been a decision victory for "Sweet Pea." Three fights after that, Chavez lost officially for the first time when Frankie Randall knocked him down in the 11th round and won a 12-round split decision that surely should have been unanimous.

Chavez was still beloved, could still fight and still draw a crowd, but the best of him was slipping away. After two blood-smeared losses to Oscar De La Hoya came a slow descent into retirement in September 2005.

There hasn't been a fight card at Estadio Azteca since Chavez-Haugen, but perhaps Canelo Alvarez might want to consider it. He's not Chavez, but nobody expects him to be. He's Canelo. There is never going to be another like Chavez.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THE AGING LION

WITH THE EXCESSES OF FAME AND THE WEIGHT OF NEARLY A HUNDRED FIGHTS UPON HIM, CHAVEZ WAS ENTERING THE FINAL STAGE OF HIS LEGENDARY CAREER

By **Michael Rosenthal**

The timing of Julio Cesar Chavez's decline as a fighter is difficult to pinpoint. Hall of Fame matchmaker Bruce Trampler compared him to Roberto Duran, who looked terrible in one fight, good in the next and lousy again in the latter years of his great career. It depended on how he trained and, of course, who he fought.

Some might point to the Pernell Whitaker fight in the fall of 1993 and say that's when it was clear that Chavez was no longer the indestructible fighting machine who dazzled the boxing world and won the hearts of his countrymen by winning his first 87 fights over the previous decade.

Maybe it came three fights later, in 1994, when Frankie Randall did the impossible: He put Chavez down for the first time in his career and defeated him by a split decision. Julio Cesar Chavez lose? Impossible.

Or perhaps it was his first of two fights with a gifted young Mexican-American who was destined to become the face of the sport, Oscar De La Hoya. Chavez, bloodied and beaten, lasted only three-plus rounds in a classic passing-of-the-torch fight in 1996.

Ron Borges, a longtime boxing writer, was convinced in a revealing moment during a cross-country media tour before the first De La Hoya fight that Chavez was deteriorating.

"I saw up close that Chavez had begun to disrespect his skills," Borges said. "Sharp skills like his must be constantly honed. He, as he's later admitted, was drinking excessively, staying out all night and already dealing with a drug use problem he has acknowledged. These are the kinds of outside actions that can slowly destroy a career.

JOHN GRUZINSKI; (ABOVE) HOLY STEIN

"One early morning during the trip, I was up early and went downstairs to eat. The restaurant was not open yet, so I waited. A few minutes later, I saw two interesting things: De La Hoya going out of the hotel to run with his strength and conditioning coach, Andy Shumway and, simultaneously, Chavez walking in clearly not from a run but rather a night on the town. The two exchanged a glance. Oscar looked perplexed. Chavez broke into a wide grin.

"That's the beginning of the end right there, brother."

Whenever that beginning was, it was difficult for Chavez's countrymen to accept. He was once the greatest fighter in the world and a true national hero. Then, when he was forced to battle elite opponents and his own formidable demons at the same time, it proved too much for him. The final years of the great fighter's career were a sad chapter in Mexican boxing and the sport in general.

That's not the end of the story, though. This one has a happy ending.

WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman of Mexico had a front-row seat for both the best and worst of Chavez, who had a close relationship with his father and predecessor, the late Jose Sulaiman.

The son remembers what he called the "magic" of Julio Cesar Chavez. The wild celebrations after his victories at the Angel of Independence monument in Mexico City, which was normally reserved for the national soccer team. The manner in which he was mobbed whenever he walked the streets. The God-given ability to touch those around him. His smile.

"He was genuine," Sulaiman said. "He did it himself. He was not the creation of some media campaign. It was just his great charisma. People would go to his gym and wait for hours just to see him. He was simply a great, great celebrity even without the social media phenomenon.

"When he fought in Mexico City, every time he fought here, after the fight, he would go to our house. He would tell my father, 'Let's go to your house and celebrate.' He would arrive with 50, 60 people and we would just have a big party and celebration. Of course, that led to many bad things as well."

One of the greatest moments of Chavez's career – the one that solidified his status as a national hero – as well as an early indication that he was mortal occurred in the same historic fight in March 1990, his knockout victory in his first meeting with Meldrick Taylor at the Las Vegas Hilton.

Taylor, a polished boxer with unusual speed, represented a blend of ability and style that other opponents would use to trouble Chavez. The 1984 Olympic champion was too fast for Chavez and landing punches more consistently than his counterpart going into the later rounds. The unbeaten superstar wasn't looking so super. He was in trouble.

"Chavez landed one, two punches and received five, six punches," said Mauricio Sulaiman, who watched the fight at home with his brothers and a large group of friends.

Then, in the final moments, with Taylor leading handily on two cards, Chavez produced some of that magic Sulaiman mentioned earlier: a right hand that stunned Taylor in the closing seconds of the fight, followed by a sloppy exchange and then another right that put a damaged Taylor onto his behind.

He got up, but referee Richard Steele didn't like what he saw and, in one of the most dramatic – bizarre? – moments in boxing history, he stopped the fight. The time remaining? Two seconds.

Taylor was never the same. Chavez was a god.

"The feeling was that he was able

Pernell Whitaker with Chavez following their infamous draw.

Chavez was 14 years a pro when he hit the canvas for the first time.

to resolve anything; he can make anything happen," Sulaiman said of Chavez. "He was an untouchable superman. To everybody, he reaffirmed that he could never lose a fight."

That perception would change in September 1993 in San Antonio.

Pernell Whitaker was one of the greatest boxers of all time, fast like Taylor but slicker defensively and more experienced. Once again, the style and skill set were all wrong for Chavez. And that's how it played out in a showdown of the world's Nos. 1 and 2 fighters before 65,000 at the Alamodome. "Sweet Pea" quite simply outboxed Chavez in what appeared to be a clear victory, arguably the greatest in Whitaker's career.

The judges saw it differently: Two scored it 115-115 while the third had Whitaker, who was defending his WBC welterweight title, winning 115-113. It was a majority draw.

Almost everyone with an inkling of how scoring works thought Whitaker was cheated, including Sports Illustrated. The magazine's cover following the fight pictured Whitaker jabbing Chavez with a one-word headline: "Robbed!"

Maybe Chavez sprinkled some of his magic dust on the judges. More likely he was better connected than Whitaker, with then-powerful promoter Don King and Jose Sulaiman in his corner. Whatever the reason, Chavez, 31 at the time, was still unbeaten at 87-0-1.

"The majority draw, of course, was a travesty," Hall of Fame boxing writer Bernard Fernandez said. "Everyone saw and knew that Whitaker had deserved to win, except maybe Chavez. And I had my doubts that he truly believes his protestations that he was the one who should have gotten the victory.

"'I want a rematch,' Chavez said. His promoter, Don King, said, 'Let's do it again.' And, of course, Team Whitaker, led by trainer Lou Duva, wanted a do-over. But it never happened. Why? Because Jose Sulaiman said no rematch was necessary because Whitaker, the WBC champ, had retained his title on the draw and, you know, that was that.

"I've always believed Chavez (a) really wanted a rematch but must have known that Sulaiman, King or whomever didn't want to allow him anywhere near Whitaker again, or (b) JCC actually understood that his style did not match up well with Whitaker's, and what remained of his aura of invincibility was beginning to fray a bit at the edges."

Perhaps more than a bit. And, according to the younger Sulaiman, it wasn't solely because of styles or advancing age. The self-destructive excesses that are available to superstars had begun to get the better of the great man.

"Chavez started losing discipline," he said. "He started concentrating more on being a superstar and a celebrity. His confidence grew that he could resolve any moment in any fight ... until the Pernell Whitaker fight, where he showed that his invincibility was in question.

"... Then came the Frankie Randall loss to open the MGM [Grand Garden Arena] in January 1994."

Chavez, still the WBC 140-pound champ, stopped relative unknowns Mike Powell and Andy Holligan in Mexico following the Whitaker fight. Next up was a more formidable challenge: Randall, a hungry 32-year-old contender from Tennessee who had waited for more than a decade for his first shot at a major championship.

Randall – 48-2-1 (39 KOs) at the time – was a good, durable boxer who

had knocked out his previous seven opponents, although that obviously didn't impress the oddsmakers: The 89-0-1 Chavez was around a 15-to-1 favorite to remain undefeated. The idea of Chavez losing was still unthinkable to some.

Then it happened. Randall took everything Chavez threw at him and fired back in kind in a fight that turned out to be evenly matched, one that could've gone either way going into the late rounds.

Round 11 would prove to be both decisive in the fight and perhaps an unfortunate turning point in Chavez's career. One, he lost the second of two points for low blows in that frame (the first deduction occurred in Round 7). And, two, those viewing were shocked to witness something in the 11th that no one had ever seen.

The fighters had paused for a moment to reset with about 30 seconds to go in a bruising round when Chavez, perhaps tired, seemed to lose concentration for a moment. That's all Randall needed. He slipped a straight right between Chavez's gloves and Chavez fell hard onto his backside, the first time he had gone down in almost 14 years as a professional.

Chavez survived the round and heard the final bell. However, Randall's spirited performance, the points Chavez lost for low blows and the knockdown were too much for the champion to overcome.

When young ring announcer Jimmy Lennon Jr. said the words "and newwwww" to indicate that Randall had won a split decision, arguably the greatest era in the history of Mexican boxing had come to an end.

Chavez, interviewed in the ring after the fight, insisted he was cheated. He lashed out at Steele – the same referee that handed him a victory over Meldrick Taylor – for the points he lost, saying the punches weren't low. He said a fight shouldn't be decided by one knockdown, although it often is. And he claimed he was never hurt.

"I want a rematch. That's all I want," he said through a translator.

He would win the second fight with Randall by a close technical decision in a fight shortened by a cut over Chavez's right eye and also exact revenge on Taylor after that, stopping him in eight rounds. The damage was done, though: Randall proved that Chavez was human after all.

"To see him be knocked down for the first time and defeated for the first time in 90 career bouts was a huge shock for the boxing industry in Mexico, for every single citizen of Mexico and Latin fans," Sulaiman said. "He regained the title by a technical decision, but he never went back to being the great Julio Cesar Chavez.

"He had a couple more title defenses, successful defenses. Then, when he lost to Oscar De La Hoya, that was just a consequence of a slope that was going down."

Chavez would fight De La Hoya for the first time in June 1996 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, when Chavez, fighting for the 99th time, was 33 and De La Hoya 23.

Mexican boxing fans were still in love with Chavez in spite of the loss to Randall. I attended a news conference to promote the fight at Olvera Street, the historical center of Los Angeles. L.A. was De La Hoya's hometown, but you wouldn't know it that day. Hundreds of starry-eyed Mexicans fawned over Chavez and dismissed De La Hoya, some by booing him.

The proud product of East Los Angeles was so incensed by the manner in which he was treated a few miles from where he grew up, his eyes filled with tears. In the end, though, it was Chavez's fans who wept.

The fight was never really competitive. De La Hoya opened a deep cut over Chavez's left eye in the first round and had his way with the old man thereafter, pecking away with quick, accurate shots that exacerbated the bleeding and rendered the crimson-faced Chavez helpless prey.

A faded Chavez was competitive in the Oscar De La Hoya rematch, but it wasn't enough.

Ring doctor Flip Homansky was merciful when he instructed referee Joe Cortez to stop the fight at 2:37 of Round 4. This was De La Hoya's time, not Chavez's.

Trampler, the Top Rank matchmaker, was merciful in his assessment of Chavez's performance.

"Chavez was ready for him," he said. "It's just unfortunate that he sprung a few leaks. It was a passing of the torch, a coming-of-age thing for Oscar, a really big fight for him. He stood up. It's not that Chavez fell down.

"He got cut. There was nothing he could do about it. Oscar just picked him to pieces."

The remainder of Chavez's career was forgettable, particularly the losses: another knockout against De La Hoya, a one-sided setback against journeyman Willy Wise, a brutal knockout against Kostya Tszyu and, in his final fight at the age of 43, a fifth-round stoppage against someone named Grover Wiley in 2005.

The Tszyu and Wiley fights took place in Phoenix, a place Chavez probably wants to wipe from his memory.

"Phoenix was unforgiving real estate for Julio Cesar Chavez," said Norm Frauenheim, a longtime boxing writer based there. "The city is named after the mythic bird, an ancient symbol for resurrection. But there was no resurrected career for Chavez in two trips to Phoenix. There were just ashes."

Chavez's career was over, but his battle in life was still raging. Alcohol and drugs had the ability to knock him out more convincingly than any opponent he ever faced in the ring. Would he succumb to the ravages of self-abuse or have his hand raised one more time?

It turns out that Chavez is stronger and more determined than anyone realized. He not only beat addiction, he has become one of his country's most passionate advocates against it.

"I'll tell you one story that makes me sad," Sulaiman said. "It was in Cancun. My father put together a night of champions in 2006. There were 98 world champions there for a big celebration. And here comes Chavez and here comes [Hector] Camacho, who are having fun together.

"They leave the party and go off with a couple of bad guys and end up at a small supermarket to buy beer. Julio gets into an argument with an attendant, who punches Julio Cesar Chavez in the face. The greatest Mexican boxing hero gets punched in the face by a nobody. He was very embarrassed. And that's when he realized he had to do something."

Something was to enter rehab, which changed his life. He has been sober for 12 years.

"Could things have ended in a tragic way? Oh, yes," Sulaiman went on. "He was lucky. He has changed so much. He has built clinics to help people who need to go to rehab. He turned his mansion in Culiacan into a clinic. That's what he's dedicated to now. The money he makes, he makes for the clinic.

"And whenever he shows up there, he is cheered. People still love him. He's still a real hero in Mexico."

THE FAME AND THE FURY

AMONG HIS COUNTRYMEN, CHAVEZ ENJOYS A LEVEL OF REVERENCE THAT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT FOR NON-MEXICANS TO UNDERSTAND

By **Don Stradley**

(Above) A huge crowd gathers for a Chavez sparring session in Hollywood.

The extreme popularity of Julio Cesar Chavez in Mexico was sometimes baffling to American fight fans. Even Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Leonard had detractors. Where Mexicans were concerned, Chavez could do no wrong. If Chavez had critics, they probably stayed out of sight and didn't dare speak.

Still, one failed to appreciate the Chavez fervor unless it was witnessed firsthand. I first saw it up close in 1994 at the most unlikely location – Rockingham Park in Salem, New Hampshire. Rockingham Park was a thoroughbred racing track that included an enormous shopping mall with a clubhouse area. The clubhouse was a large, clean room about the size of a high school cafeteria, fitted with several big screens where races were shown. Now and then, the venue hosted live boxing, but on this night the attraction was a closed-circuit pay-per-view event, the main bout being the second fight between Chavez and Frankie Randall in Las Vegas. There was no particular buzz in the room, no sense that anything momentous was about to take place. That is, until the Chavez fans arrived.

Salem's Mexican population was miniscule. According to a 2000 census,

Salem was 95 percent white, with Hispanics or Latinos representing less than two percent of the populace. Yet the room was quickly filling with Mexican people of all ages, from grandpas to children, all there to see Chavez. It was clear that Mexican families from nearby areas had made the trek to Salem to see this boxing event. Some, I imagined, were from out of state. For most of us gathered in the clubhouse, it was just a fight, a way to beat the Saturday night doldrums. Many on the scene were unfamiliar with boxing and unaware of Chavez (they probably hadn't seen boxing since Ali fought Leon Spinks on free TV), but the Mexican fans were different, chattering nervously, settling in to watch their country's greatest sports figure. Randall had defeated Chavez just a few months earlier, snapping his cherished undefeated streak. This was to be Chavez's redemption.

I felt sorry for the Chavez fans, because on this night he was far from his best. In Round 2, Randall rocked him, and one of the older Mexican men behind me stood up and screamed. His party laughed and told him to sit down. Mostly, the Mexican fans in the room sat in silence as Chavez plodded along, unable to impose his will on Randall. When Chavez managed to land a punch, there was a burst of excitement from the people around me, but these moments were few.

By the eighth round, Chavez was bleeding badly. Suddenly, the fight was stopped and awarded to him on a technicality. Apparently, he'd been ahead on two of the scorecards at the time of the stoppage, and that was enough to swing the verdict his way. Most of the crowd at Rockingham had no idea what was happening or why Chavez's hand was being raised. It was a crap win.

But you wouldn't know it by the Mexicans in the room.

Without exaggeration, the Mexicans around me broke into a victory celebration more appropriate for World Cup time. In their eyes, Chavez had once again done the miraculous, the spectacular. It hadn't been a great fight or even a good one, but just seeing his hand raised was enough. They would not go home and discuss the peculiar rules of boxing that awarded a fighter who seemed to be losing. They didn't care that he'd looked sort of old and sluggish or that he'd failed to vindicate himself. Their only concern was that Chavez had won. For everyone else in the room, the fight was quickly forgotten. To the Mexicans, their superman could still fly.

As I watched the Chavez supporters file out of the clubhouse, smiles bursting across their faces, I was envious. I wished I had enjoyed myself as much as they did. These people were dancing and singing. Had I ever danced after a fight? Nope. Not once.

Diego Luna, who directed a

CARLOS SCHIEBECK

documentary on Chavez in 2007, once explained the phenomenon as well as anyone ever has.

Chavez was, Luna told The Guardian, "a national hero. For many, many years in Mexico, the only good news we had was this man's fights. As a kid, I remember going to my uncle's house, who would get the pay-per-view, and we would have all the family and friends watching on a big screen and it was a huge party. We got used to this man always winning. They were very intense fights, but it didn't matter if the other guy was better; Chavez would win. Losing is a word that we're very used to saying; defeat is a word that is part of every day. So the idea of having a Mexican who didn't know what losing was for 11 years made it a very special story."

For a country without its own Babe Ruth or Jack Dempsey, Mexico put a lot of weight on Chavez to carry. True, there'd been notable Mexican fighters before him, but Chavez's level of fame was unique. Teen boys would have his name shaved into their heads and dyed the colors of the Mexican flag. Chavez memorabilia was sold on street corners. When 132,247 fans showed up at Aztec Stadium to see Chavez dismantle Greg Haugen in 1993, there were hundreds of security guards on hand just in case things went out of control. The guards were carrying guns and wearing full riot gear, many accompanied by trained attack dogs. Chavez had sparked something that transcended boxing.

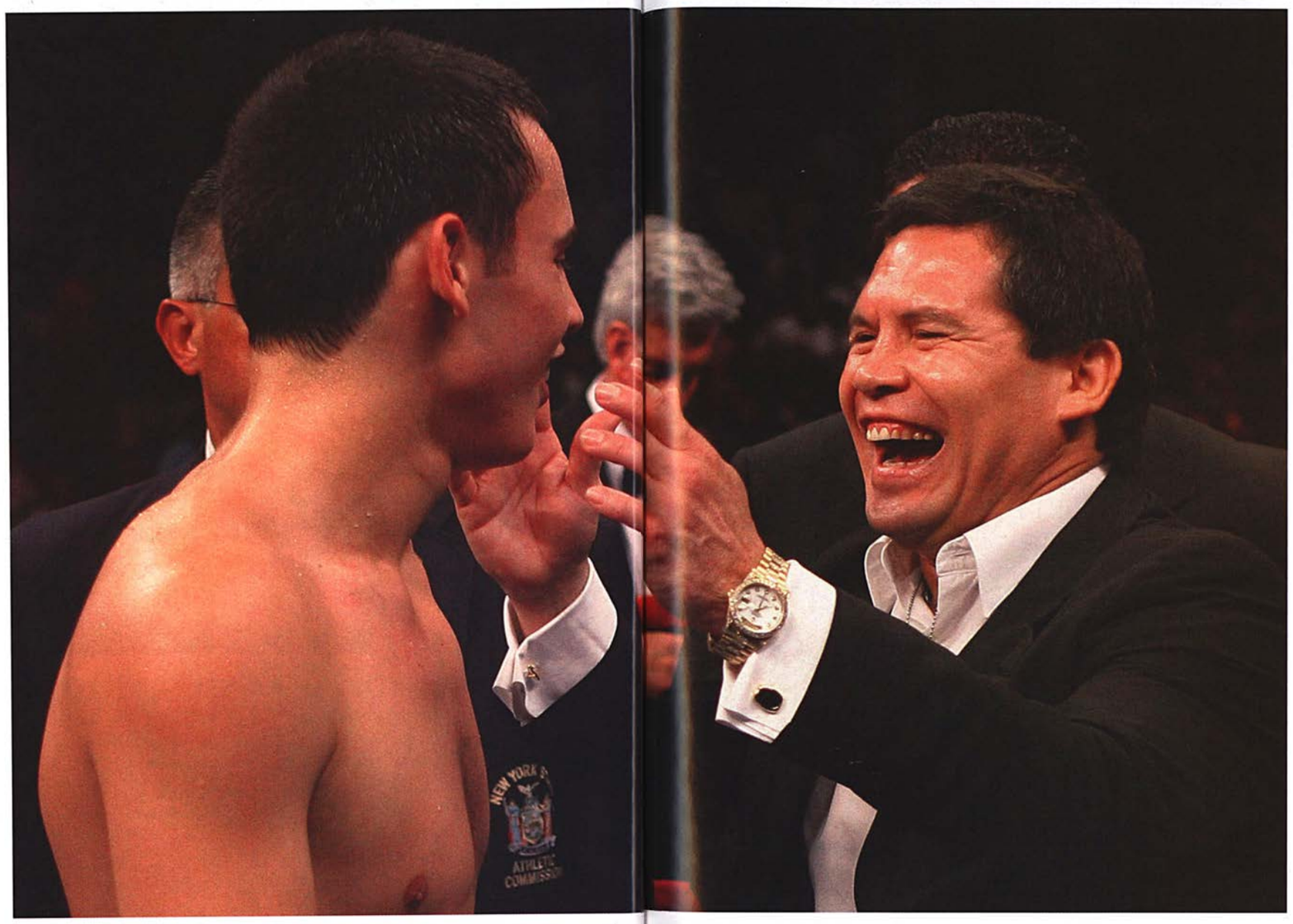
What did such reverence do to Chavez? The pressure of fame no doubt contributed to his well-known problems with alcohol and cocaine, but did it manifest in other ways?

When talking to people at HBO, where many of Chavez's fights were shown, the words "arrogant" and "unpleasant" came up often. Jim Lampley once told me, "Chavez was the sort of fighter who complained that his name was not large enough on the advertising." Lampley added that the generation of Mexican fighters who followed in Chavez's wake were more gentlemanly. Bob Arum once described Chavez to me as "moody." Gary Smith of Sports Illustrated once wrote of Chavez, "There's a coldness inside of him that makes him think he can keep people waiting for hours ..."

Much has been written about Chavez's rough childhood in Culiacan, the Mexican drug and murder capital. Less has been written about the impact he felt after becoming a nation's icon. True, he could walk down most streets in the world and go unrecognized. But in Mexico he was Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson rolled into one body. Such fame was unnatural, perhaps too much for any one person to endure. Look what it did to Elvis and Michael.

"All of Mexico is depending on me," Chavez said after his victory over Hector Camacho in 1992. "It's a big responsibility. I cannot fail them. All the money from my lesser fights, I am giving to disaster victims, to hospitals, to orphans, to the elderly."

Elvis and Michael Jackson? He was also Santa Claus and Franklin



It wasn't always smooth sailing, but Senior adored Junior's ring success.

Roosevelt, setting up everything from food banks to affordable housing projects in Culiacan.

Dr. Ferdie Pacheco, who spent many years in the Ali camp and knew the look and smell of fame, claimed Chavez had the same "bigger than life" presence as Ali but differed in that he wasn't a spotlight hound, which is what helped endear him to his worshiping Mexican fans.

"It's simple," Pacheco told the Washington Post at the height of Chavez's career. "He doesn't speak English. He lives in the same village he came from. He doesn't want to go to Los Angeles to be on Hollywood Squares or to New York City to be on David Letterman. He doesn't give a damn about anything outside Mexico, and even less about publicity. He's an independent man who believes he's the best fighter in the world."

These were traits the Mexican people found irresistible. The love was being shown long before Chavez was fighting the likes of Camacho and Haugen.

When Chavez returned to Culiacan after beating Edwin Rosario in 1987, he was greeted by a traffic jam at the airport that stretched out for more than a mile, such was his fandom early in his career. Around that same time, he was approached by Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party. It was believed that de Gortari planned to offer Chavez a job. De Gortari was on the verge of being elected president of Mexico, but Chavez kept him waiting for 90 minutes and treated the party leader's visit as a non-event. "The politicians just want to be associated with a winner," Chavez said.

It could be that Chavez felt he deserved the admiration. He once said he was supernaturally blessed, having once been visited by a vision of Christ on the cross, an incident he believed made him special and added to his ability in the ring. If he was slightly deluded and full of himself, well, so are lots of fighters. One doesn't become great without being at least a bit self-absorbed. Chavez's wife once said his favorite pastime was to shut himself away and watch videos of his own fights.

I saw the popularity of Chavez a second time, many years after the night at Rockingham Park. By this time it was 2006 or '07, and I was writing for The Ring. Chavez's son, Julio Jr., was on the undercard of a Top Rank show at Madison Square Garden, knocking the hell out of an easy opponent. At the time, riding the wave of his dad's popularity, Julio Jr. seemed to have a fine future ahead of him. As the Mexican journalists around me praised the son of the legend, a short, stocky figure hovered at the end of the row.

It was the icon himself: Julio Cesar Chavez.

He was only in his mid 40s, but he looked older, drained. He'd had more than 100 fights and wore them all on a weathered face. A few of the Mexican writers nodded to him respectfully. He seemed distracted, uninterested in pleasantries.

He'd lingered around the press section all during his son's fight. At one point, a Mexican writer stood up and offered Chavez a chair. Chavez plopped down, said nothing, and stared at the ring, watching his son fire off punches at a hapless rival. Press row at the Garden was an uncomfortable place, overcrowded with too many writers and endless bundles of wires and laptops, but Chavez must've thought the vantage point was better for seeing the ring. When the fight was over and his son had won, Chavez stood up and paced around.

Apparently, the old lion was hungry.

A Mexican writer near me had a bag of M&M's. Without asking, Chavez reached over and grabbed the bag, used his gnarled fingers to dig out a few candies, and ate them. Then he threw the bag down. The writer, pleased that the legend had deemed his junk food worthy, slid the bag in Chavez's direction as if to say, take the whole bag, campeon. ... Chavez helped himself.

Then, as one, the entire row of Mexican journalists stood up with offerings: candy bars, more M&M's, peanuts. Chavez wandered up the row and took everything that was being offered, a bored hog rooting for truffles. One writer offered him some bottled water so he could wash the mess down. Others, from two and three rows back, appeared to hurdle over their non-Mexican colleagues with their own treats, all hoping that Chavez might eat from their hands. It would be a great story for the folks back home.

This strange ritual of feeding Chavez lasted no more than a minute, but it was fascinating. Through it all, Chavez said nothing. He may have nodded once when a writer complimented his son's performance, but that was it.

In a way, it made sense. He had probably been nervous prior to his son's bout, unable to eat, and now that it was over he wanted a snack. Still, it was peculiar. One couldn't imagine American journalists rushing to feed Evander Holyfield.

When the candy frenzy was over, the Mexican correspondents chatted among themselves. The topic was Chavez Jr. They all agreed that he looked ready to carry on the family tradition and be another great fighter. They seemed giddy at the thought of having another Chavez. Could Mexico be so lucky?

The younger Chavez, showered and in street clothes, eventually joined his father on press row. They sat together quietly. No one approached them. Even the most rabid acolytes knew not to intrude on this father-son moment.

Of course, the son could never live up to what the father had accomplished. Who could? Julio Cesar Chavez was one of a kind. On that night, however, there was a relaxed and happy feeling in the air. Chavez had survived the bumpy ride of fame and had lived to see his son become a boxer. Now, the pair sat at the end of the row, quietly watching the rest of the fights, no different than any other father and son. At one point, the father put an arm around his son's shoulder and gave him a quick hug.

It was a gesture anyone could understand, a simple gesture that transcended boxing.

GREATEST HITS: JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ

SEVEN FIGHTS THAT HELPED FORGE THE LEGACY OF A MEXICAN HERO

By **Julio Cesar Chavez** • (Interview by **Bernardo Osuna** / Translated by **Diego Morilla**)

MARIO MARTINEZ

September 13, 1984, Olympic Auditorium, Los Angeles • Title: WBC junior lightweight

"It was the most emotional moment of my career because it was a dream that I always had as a kid, to become champion of the world. I had the goal set in my mind, but it seemed impossible to me because in those times, it was very difficult to become champion of the world. And obviously when that opportunity came, I made the most out of it. I knew that I was facing a fighter who was the favorite, a well-known fighter in L.A. I was an unknown fighter. That night ended up being the most beautiful thing I experienced in life, because I had fulfilled my dream. Also, coming back to Culiacan and being received by everyone after the fight was something incredible and historic.

"It was a tremendous fight. It was a difficult fight, very tough. 'Azabache' Martinez was a warrior, truly, very brave. But in those days, no one could beat me. Because I had that dream of becoming world champion, I had trained like never before for that fight. And the truth is that when I traded punches with him, I knew I was going to win the fight. I felt I was landing good punches; I felt I hurt him. He was very courageous, and hurt as he was, he did land some heavy punches, but those punches didn't hurt me. I knew that victory was near, and that's why I came out in the eighth round to win the fight in any way possible, because he was already suffering from a lot of damage in his nose and in his eyebrow. I won the fight clearly. It was a great fight, rough and tough, but I had too much hunger to become a champion, and that was my night."

RESULT: CHAVEZ TKO 8 »

EDWIN ROSARIO

November 21, 1987, Las Vegas Hilton • Title: WBA lightweight

"For many people it was an easy fight, but for me it was an extremely difficult fight. Out of the 115 fights that I had, with all due respect to all other fighters, Edwin Rosario was the one who hit me the hardest. He would land a jab or a straight right and I felt like he hit me with a baseball bat on the head. Fortunately, in those days, no one could beat me. That night was historic for me. My mentality was spot-on; I had trained like never before. Going up in weight was beneficial for me because I was struggling too much to make 130. I would go two days without eating or drinking water just to make 130. So when I climbed to lightweight ... Aside from all the bullshit he said about me, when he insulted me, my family, this (feeling stronger at the heavier weight) gave me more motivation to give him the beating of his life.

"I started using [the red headband in this fight] because Eddie Mafuz (Chavez's manager at the time) told me, 'You know, Julio, Rosario's mother is a witch. She has your photo on a platter surrounded with ice. You need to use a red ribbon on your head to keep away the bad spirits that she is summoning. You'll see; he will get scared of you.' I thought to myself, 'This guy is crazy. How am I going to use that red ribbon? It's ridiculous!' He started begging me to do it until I finally got that ribbon. And then it took off and became viral. It became my lucky charm. After that, they started paying me to use it, so it became a habit and I used it for all my fights. I don't know whether I won because of the ribbon or what. I obviously think I was better than him. But that red ribbon became a habit for me and I couldn't fight without it. After that, many other fighters in Mexico adopted the red ribbon."

RESULT: CHAVEZ TKO 11

JOSE LUIS RAMIREZ

October 29, 1988, Las Vegas Hilton • Titles: Ring/ WBA/WBC lightweight

"It was a complicated night for me, in the sense that I was fighting with a great friend. We used to spar a lot in the gym, and I'll be honest with you; sometimes I would cry in pain after our sparring sessions because he would beat the crap out of me. He was already a national champion when I was starting out. When they put him against me in the ring, he was quite abusive. He would have no compassion for anyone. Sometimes he would beat me up so bad that I cried as soon as I left the ring, but I kept going in and sparring with him again and again until it reached a point in which the whole gym would stop working out to watch us. Our sparring sessions were wars, and we reached the moment where I started boxing better than him, again and again.

"His manager and buddy [Ramon] 'Zurdo' Felix, who was my manager as well, would pay more attention to him than me. So I chose to leave the gym because Felix didn't give me the attention I needed. Even though he cried and wanted me back, I didn't come back. He never thought I would leave; it was a big surprise for him. And when that fight came up against Ramirez ... it was a stressful situation. Having to trade threats with him and seeing Felix still harboring bad feelings towards me ... it was tough. It was a difficult fight also because he could punch and take a punch as well, but I dominated him. I had a broken rib for that fight; I shouldn't have fought that day. But even so, I didn't want to cancel the fight. I fought intelligently, because if I had traded punches with him, hurt as I was, I would have stopped him. But I had to fight an intelligent fight because I didn't want him to hurt my ribs.

"[The headbutt that caused the fight to be stopped] was an accident. He was a clean fighter, and so was I. Simply put, the opposing guards (orthodox vs. southpaw) cause more head butts, people stepping on each other, and that accident just happened. But regardless of that, I thought I would have won."

RESULT: CHAVEZ TD 11

ROGER MAYWEATHER

May 13, 1989, Great Western Forum, Inglewood, California • Title: WBC junior welterweight

"To tell you the truth, I took that fight because of vanity, that's all. No other Mexican fighter had been a three-division champion in history, and I thought that if I had already stopped him once (TKO 2 in July 1985) I could do it again at junior welterweight. Remember, I had just been crowned lightweight champion. I was a natural lightweight, but I went up to 140 because I felt that I could win that fight. What I didn't know is that at junior welterweight, Mayweather was a different fighter. When the fight started, I said, 'Oh, shit, I think they changed the fighter!' Roger Mayweather had a demolishing right hand. It didn't just hurt ... it injured you. He hit me hard in the first fight and also in the second one. Fortunately, he never noticed that, and that's why I defeated him, because I think he got tired of hitting me and not doing any damage. I frustrated him by forcing him to engage more and more. And it was a tough fight for me, because he connected a straight right, I don't remember the round ... I felt he had sent me back to Culiacan, but I was still in Los Angeles! He was coming off a strong knockout streak; he had stopped a lot of Mexicans. They called him 'The Mexican Assassin.'

"[When Mayweather entered the ring wearing a sombrero], my first reaction was to laugh. I believe he wanted to earn the love of all Mexican fans, but it backfired on him because people started booing him. But the truth is that Roger taught me a lot of things, too. He was an awesome fighter. Even though he couldn't handle my power, he was a terrific fighter who could hit you with both hands, especially the right.

"I talked to him a few times later in life, and I asked him to train me! (laughs) He was truly a great trainer! Roger was the one who made Floyd Jr. and made him a great fighter. But the truth is that he was great both as a trainer and as a fighter."

RESULT: CHAVEZ TKO 10

MELDRICK TAYLOR

March 17, 1990, Las Vegas Hilton • Titles: IBF/WBC junior welterweight

"I would not like to go back to that moment, because it has been the toughest and most difficult fight of my career. It is the only fight in which I felt I was close to death. It was a fight in which I made a superhuman effort. Why? Because I fought a faster and stronger fighter. He was an unbeaten world champion, an Olympic medalist. The only way I could defeat him was the way in which I fought: going forward all the time. He would attack me again and again; he would land 10 or 20 punches and I would land four ... but mine were power punches.

"In the 10th round, he landed a combination, and I lost my senses. It was the only fight in which it happened to me. After that barrage of punches, I didn't care anymore about getting hit; all I wanted was to punish him. You'll see that in the 10th round was where I won the fight. After that barrage, that's where I started hitting him much harder. Because I felt hurt, I lost all sensibility; all I cared about was punching him. In the 11th round I was groggy too; I don't know how I ended that round. And then I get to the 12th round, where my trainer pours ice-cold water on me and says, 'C'mon, Julio! Wake up! Do it for your family! Do it for Mexico!' Those were magic words, because in that 12th round I went out to knock him out, and that's where I connected that right hand that staggered him, and I didn't let him go.

"I'll be honest with you; when I knocked him down, I didn't care about winning or losing ... All I wanted was for the fight to be over. I was close to dying! I wanted to throw up, and I wanted to pass out in the ring. That scared me a lot, because if I had vomited right then ... I probably wouldn't be talking to you right now. I would have died from a stroke, because that's what happens to those who vomit. I had a terrible headache. When he went down, I didn't care anymore about the result; all I wanted was to end the ordeal. Even when the referee stopped the fight, my brother Rodolfo climbs into the ring and says, 'We won! We won!' I said, 'Yeah, sure ... but just get me out of the ring. I want to throw up. I want to pass out.' Fortunately I didn't, but if you see the fight, you'll see the moment in which I almost vomit in the ring.

"With all due respect to all other fighters, Taylor was the best fighter I faced in all of my career."

RESULT: CHAVEZ TKO 12

HECTOR CAMACHO

September 12, 1992, Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas • Title: WBC junior welterweight

"Believe it or not, 'Macho' Camacho was a great friend of mine. He was a great friend outside the ring, but he knew how to bring on the heat in the promotion. I fought many other fighters who offended me, insulted me, hurt me, who even told me how I was going to die. Camacho would be a loudmouth and make jokes, but he never insulted my mother or my kids or my wife. He knew how to promote a fight. All tickets were sold in half an hour. Remember, the fight was on pay-per-view in Mexico, but the system failed and the president had to make the fight available for all Mexicans. It was tremendous, getting to Culiacan and then having the president call me up to Mexico City. I arrive at the airport, and from there to the president's residence, the streets were full of people greeting me as if I was the Pope. (laughs) It was truly unbelievable.

"For many observers, it was an easy fight, but no; it was a difficult fight for me, because I would fight at a pace where I would be chasing him all the time, punch after punch, and forcing the fight. It was the only way I could win. Many people saw it as an easy fight, but it was exhausting. I had to be on him all the time, punching as hard as possible, and he never fell. It was rough. And after that night, I told him, 'I won't call you "Macho minus" anymore. From now on, you're "Macho man." (laughs) Because you were very brave.' In the 10th round, where he stood to trade punches with me, I got tired like you wouldn't imagine, because he would hit me with everything. And I said, 'Shit, I am going to lose this fight!' But thank God, the condition that I was in was incredible.

"He was a terrific fighter. He was extremely fast, intelligent, complicated, difficult, and above all he had a great chin. Throughout his career, he was never stopped!"

RESULT: CHAVEZ UD 12

GREG HAUGEN

February 20, 1993, Estadio Azteca, Mexico City • Title: WBC junior welterweight

"What can I say? I got scared. When they said I was going to fight at Estadio Azteca, I thought, 'They're crazy.' How am I going to fight there? How am I going to put more than 100,000 people there? And I swear, it was a magical, historical night. I thought I could bring in 30 or 40 thousand people, but there were people left outside! I felt panic. When I arrived at the stadium to see it full of people, then to walk for 12 minutes to get to the ring ... regardless of how full the stadium is, you never walk more than three or four minutes. I took 12 minutes! There were like 20,000 at ringside, and the people wanted to put their hands on us. You couldn't go through. It was a little frustrating. When I got to the ring, all the tension I had on me had worn off. But getting there and seeing all those people was incredible.

"Look, to me, the punishment has to fit the sin. When I put him down, I swear to God I could have finished him. But I said, 'No, I won't knock him out.' People had come to see me, and you should have seen the stadium, full to capacity ... and then you knock the guy out in the first round? Instead of hating him, they're going to hate me! That's what I thought. But after that, because of the altitude in Mexico City and the pressure of the people, I got tired in the fourth round. I said, 'Hey, Julio, take it easy!' and I did. I thought that I had to knock him out in [the fifth] round. I came out more calm, relaxed, and I stopped him. But I did punish him, yes. I didn't knock him out in the first round, because of the people.

"I arrived back in Culiacan and the people carried me for five or six hours. Streets were lined with people waiting for me, cheering. It was crazy but awesome."

RESULT: CHAVEZ TKO 5

FACING CHAVEZ

THE MEN IN THE OTHER CORNER DESCRIBE WHAT IT WAS LIKE FACING "J.C. SUPERSTAR"

Compiled by **Anson Wainwright**

MARIO MARTINEZ

September 13, 1984, Olympic Auditorium, Los Angeles • vacant WBC junior lightweight title • Chavez wins by TKO 8

"I was well-prepared for that fight. I was the favorite going into it because Julio hadn't been on TV, and prior to that fight I had fought three times in Los Angeles. I was 19 years old. I was looking forward to the fight and becoming champion, but it was a tough fight for me from the get-go. Julio just kept coming forward and won that fight. It was a great fight, and Julio won and was champ and did a great job representing that. I really admire him because in his career, not just in our fight, Chavez did what he needed to do and knew what he was doing. Everybody sees him as a come-forward fighter, which he was, but he was a very smart fighter. Chavez was the smartest fighter I faced. The best overall, most complete fighter would be Chavez because of everything he did. Looking back on that fight, it was a difference in class. I definitely thought he was a great fighter and champion; he was strong and kept coming forward. But I never imagined he was going to end up where he ended up at."

RUBEN CASTILLO

April 19, 1985, The Forum, Inglewood, California • WBC junior lightweight title • Chavez wins by TKO 6

"Don King calls me up and says, 'There's a kid who just won the [WBC 130-pound] title against 'Azabache' Martinez; he's a brand-new kid. You'll beat his ass, you'll become the champion and we'll sign a big contract.' You know who that guy was? Julio Cesar Chavez. Julio did not fight the same fight with me as he did with 'Azabache.' I got stopped in the sixth round. I told Don, 'DK, you better sign this kid to a lifetime contract. This kid is not your ordinary champion; the kid is going to be a legend in boxing.' He said, 'You think so?' I said, 'I know so.' I was right. Julio was very, very strong. Julio had more power than anyone I fought in my life. The best punch he had was a left hook to the body. When he hit you to the body ... oh my God. I was doing 300 sit-ups a day; that didn't matter one bit. Alexis Arguello hit so hard, but he hit you with one shot; Julio hit you with a barrage of shots. Of all the fighters I fought, nobody compared to Julio Cesar Chavez. What made him so good, when he threw, he's throwing to hit you. He's not throwing just to throw a punch. When he threw, he knew he was going to catch you with something. He picked his shots; he did not waste any punches. When he cornered you, you were in a world of shit, because he's going to hurt you."

JUAN LAPORTE

December 12, 1986, Madison Square Garden, New York • WBC junior lightweight title • Chavez wins by UD 12

"I went in there with no respect for him and showed him I'm as strong as he is. In the first round, I hit him with a left hook to the body and kept it up from there, but I didn't keep things up how I was supposed to do. I just wanted to fight with him, show him I could stay there with him. Chavez had power. I hit him a couple of times and I hit him hard. I know that after the fight he couldn't eat for a couple of days because his jaw was messed up. He could take a good shot."

RAFAEL LIMON

June 4, 1988, Mazatlan, Mexico • non-title bout • Chavez wins by TKO 7

"We were sparring partners for a long time. He was young when he lived in Culiacan. When I faced Chavez, I was retired; it was because of the change of opponent. The other opponent got hurt, so I stepped in. Chavez had a really hard chin; he resisted all the punches. Neither of us would retreat in the sparring sessions. We only sparred three rounds, because they were wars. Chavez was the best. He is the best Mexican fighter ever – past, present and future."

JOSE LUIS RAMIREZ

October 29, 1988, Las Vegas Hilton, Las Vegas • Titles: Ring/WBA/WBC lightweight • Chavez wins by TKO 7

"He was very intelligent, very smart, he could move in all directions. Chavez was a good puncher. Chavez was a top fighter, the best in the world at that time, and a complete fighter. "

ROGER MAYWEATHER

I: July 7, 1985, Riviera Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas • WBC junior lightweight title • Chavez wins by TKO 2 • II: May 13, 1989, The Forum, Inglewood, California • WBC junior welterweight title • Chavez wins by TKO 10

"Julio Cesar Chavez was good. He had the best chin. I thought I had him gone a couple of times (in the rematch), but he didn't go. He had a chin. (laughs) Julio Cesar Chavez was good."

MELDRICK TAYLOR

I: March 17, 1990, Las Vegas Hilton, Las Vegas • Titles: IBF/ WBC junior welterweight • Chavez wins by TKO 12 • II: September 17, 1994, MGM Grand, Las Vegas • Titles: WBC junior welterweight • Chavez wins by TKO 8

"I hit him with shots and he didn't blink too much. I hit him with some good shots. I guess the way he puts his punches together. He got his body behind the punches. I'd say because he conserved himself; he didn't rush his punches, he took his time. He was behind but he kept his composure. His punching power, his durability, his accuracy. I think Chavez [was the best opponent I fought]. He was a [three-division] world champion before I fought him. He [was] undefeated; he beat everyone. I had to think more, I had to be in better shape and be sharper."

GREG HAUGEN

February 20, 1993, Estadio Azteca, Mexico City, Mexico • WBC junior welterweight title • Chavez wins by TKO 5

"If I had been in better shape [and hadn't been going through] a nasty divorce, it would have been a lot different. I was training on cocaine and vodka. I had no chance in that fight. I got hit early in the first round and it took my legs away. Julio's jab was pretty quick, but it was also hard. He was pretty strong. Chavez hit pretty hard. I didn't hit Chavez enough to test my power."

PERNELL WHITAKER

September 10, 1993, Alamodome, San Antonio, Texas • Titles: WBC welterweight title • majority draw

"Everybody I've been in the ring with was considered a big puncher. The one who stands out the most would be Julio Cesar Chavez. Chavez was pretty smart. He was just a good fighter. He had great boxing skills. He was a big puncher; you had to be careful. You don't get caught up with him, going toe-to-toe. I think I got at least nine of them rounds. I got to give something to Julio: He got at least three of those rounds. Other than that, he got nothing."

TONY LOPEZ

December 10, 1994, Estadio de Beisbol, Monterrey, Mexico • WBC junior welterweight title • Chavez wins by TKO 10

"I don't put people on a pedestal, but in reality, he was 91-1-1. You've got to respect that – to a point. When the bell rings, all that leaves. He's done great for boxing. It was fun; it was a great experience. Some people loved you, some people wanted him to kill you, some people wanted you to kill him. It wasn't like I thought it was. It was about a 50-50 split – I was kind of amazed; I thought it would be 90-10. It was an honor to be on a card like that. He was better than an exceptional fighter. His punches were heavier than the average fighter; they weren't devastating. He took quite a good shot. He stood right there in front of you. He could take it, all power to him. He moved well. He was really calm, doing his job, no big deal – this is what he does, he knows his business, he's been doing it a long time. It's a sign of a champion."

OSCAR DE LA HOYA

I: June 7, 1996, Caesars Palace, Las Vegas • WBC junior welterweight title • De La Hoya wins by TKO 4 • II: September 18, 1998, Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas • WBC welterweight title • De La Hoya wins by TKO 8

"I hit him with some good shots and he still wouldn't go down. He had one of the best chins in the world, ever. Very resilient. He still is my hero. It was a double-edged sword, to have to fight my hero and beat him the way I did. It was a sad moment in my life, but a happy moment. For the second fight, he came and fought. He actually wobbled me, but I didn't show it."

KOSTYA TSZYU

July 29, 2000, Veteran's Memorial Coliseum, Phoenix, Arizona • WBC junior welterweight title • Tszyu wins by TKO 6

"He's a huge legend in my eyes, and I fought him in not his best condition, but that's not an excuse for me or him. At the same time, Chavez wanted desperately to be a champion again. But at that time, no one could stop me." RING

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

Official Website > *http://jcchavezmexico.com*
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EL GRAN

CAMPEON

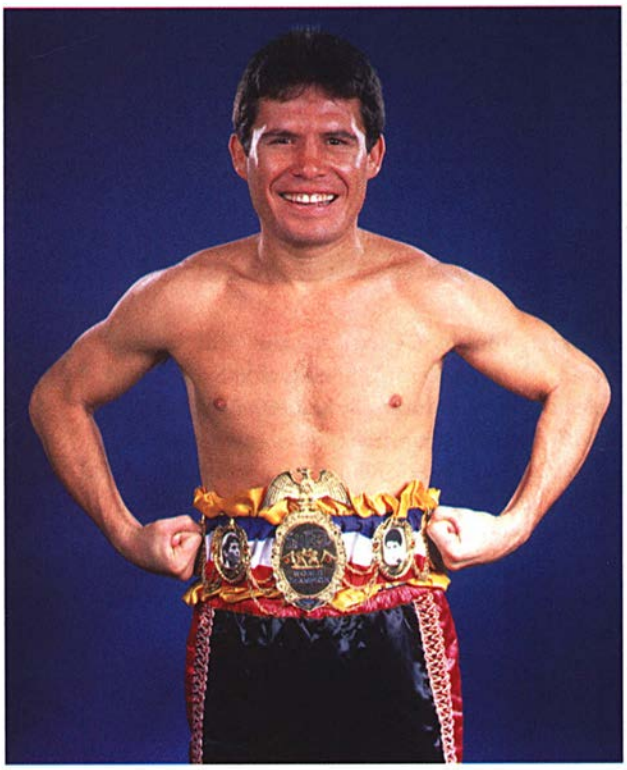
MEXICO HAS PRODUCED SOME OF THE FINEST WARRIORS EVER TO GRACE A BOXING RING – AND CONTINUES TO DO SO – BUT **JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ'S** ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND IDOL STATUS MIGHT NEVER BE SURPASSED

By **Lee Groves**

When the greatest boxing nations are discussed, it doesn't take long for Mexico to be mentioned. Depending on the source, the first Mexican world champion was either Baby Arizmendi (who claimed the world featherweight title as recognized by the California boxing commission in October 1932) or Battling Shaw (a junior welterweight champion crowned in February 1933). But what is beyond dispute is that more than 100 others have won world titles since and that 16 have been enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Mexico continues to be a pugilistic powerhouse; today's roll call includes six widely recognized titlists (super middleweight Canelo Alvarez, junior lightweight Oscar Valdez, featherweight Emanuel Navarrete, junior bantamweight Juan Francisco Estrada, flyweight Julio Cesar Martinez and junior flyweight Elwin Soto), two Ring champions (Alvarez and Estrada, who are also in The Ring's pound-for-pound rankings), and 14 entrants in the Ring Ratings as of June 2021.

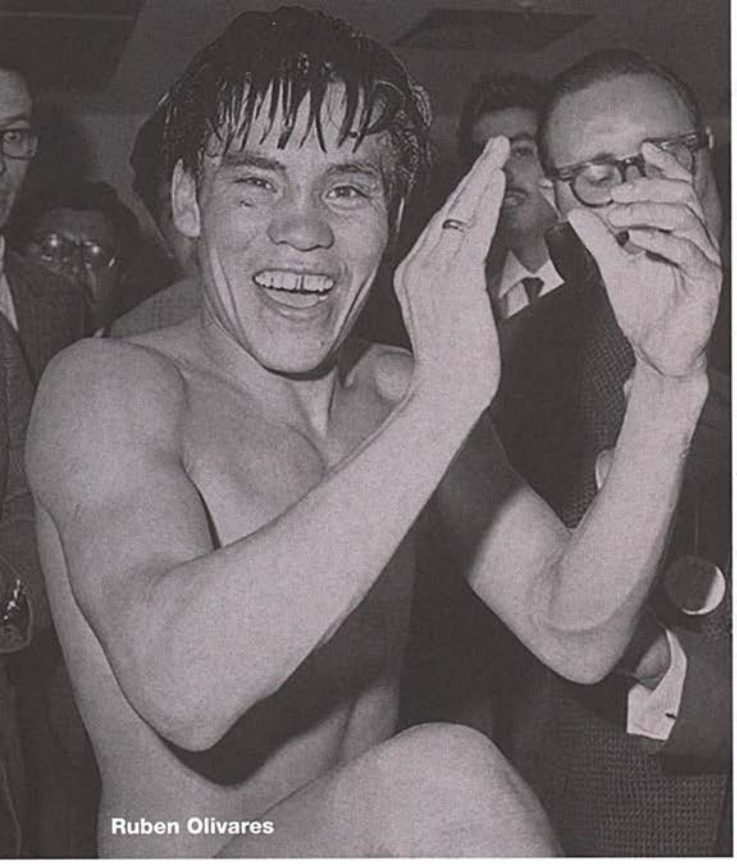
Mexico not only is revered for the tremendous success its boxers achieved, but also because they epitomize the intangibles all boxers hold in high regard: courage, aggressiveness, perseverance and resourcefulness in the face of adversity. The vast majority used boxing as a vehicle to overcome impoverished childhoods, and the best of them exquisitely blended high-level skill with unconquerable toughness and magnetic charisma. To Mexicans, boxing is not just a sport or a means to make a living; it is the physical and spiritual representation of who they are as a people.



The Ring Magazine lightweight champion, 1988-89.

Just as other sports elevate their standing by comparing themselves to boxing, boxers from other nations lift themselves by attempting to create a linkage to Mexican fighters. Onetime IBF featherweight titleholder Evgeny Gradovich, a fighter known for his incredible work rate and almost inhuman capacity for absorbing punishment, called himself "The Mexican Russian," while former WBO bantamweight king Tomoki Kameda picked up the moniker "El Mexicanito" ("The Little Mexican") after moving to Mexico and learning the language. Earlier in his career, WBA middleweight king Gennadiy Golovkin endeared himself to the Mexican public with his savage body punching, his string of KO victories that eventually grew to 23 and his disarming charm, so much so that many Mexicans cheered for him over their countryman Alvarez during their hotly disputed draw in September 2017 and the rematch that "Canelo" won by majority decision 364 days later.

Seven years before Golovkin faced Alvarez, trainer Abel Sanchez introduced "GGG" to the "Mexican style" by playing him a tape of Julio Cesar Chavez's systematic beatdown of Edwin Rosario. Chavez's performance on that November 1987 night perfectly illustrated the Mexican fighting template: relentless aggression, wrenching body work, superb infighting and understated but effective defense. By winning his second divisional championship on a worldwide stage and advancing his record to an eye-popping 57-0 (46 KOs), Chavez stamped himself as the heir apparent to the legacy created by past legends.



Ruben Olivares

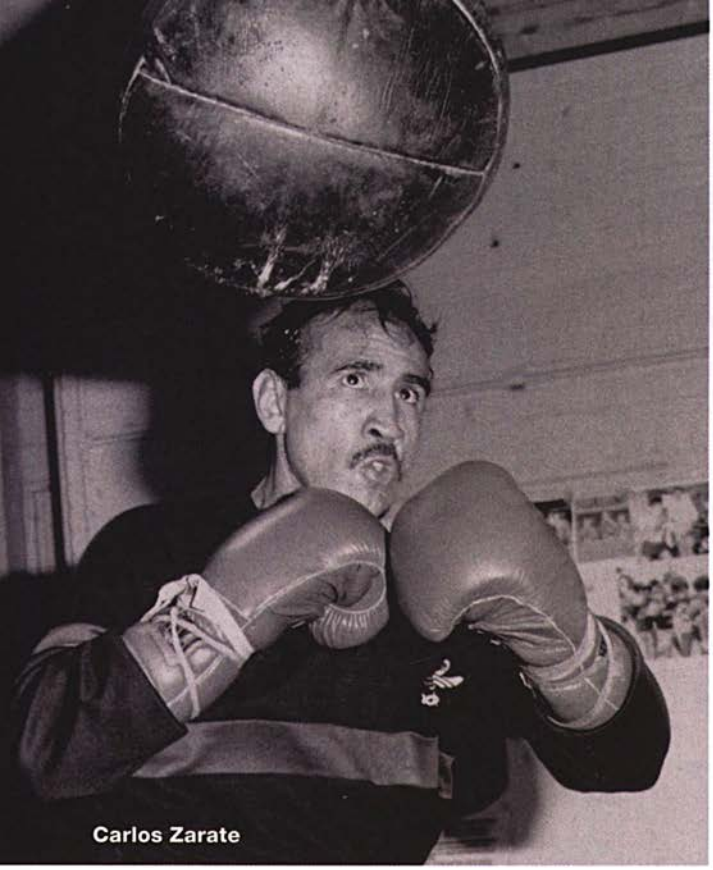
Salvador Sanchez

And what legends they were. At the time Chavez defeated Rosario, the competition for greatest Mexican fighter of all time was packed with top-shelf names:

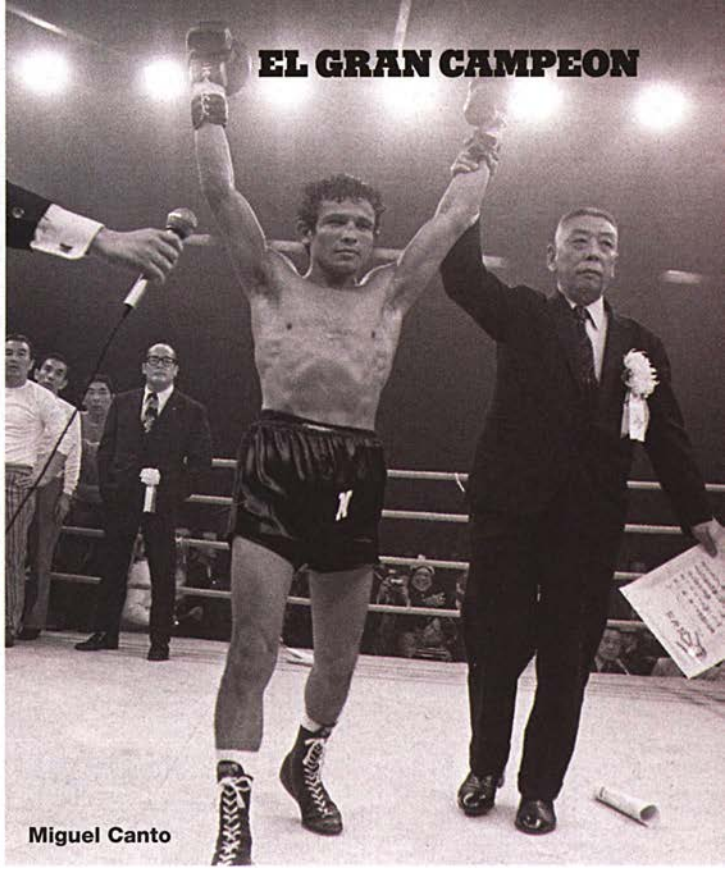
*** Ruben Olivares: "El Puas" was** idolized for his wrecking-ball hooks to the liver, his astonishingly high KO percentage (he stopped 49 of his first 52 opponents and ended his 23-year career with 79 KOs in his 89-13-3 record), his gap-toothed smile and his willingness to party hearty with his admirers. He, more than most, was a man of the people, and his popularity was not solely based on whether he won or lost but also on how he plied his trade. "Rockabye Ruben" drew enormous crowds on both sides of the border and he thrilled them with bantamweight title victories over then-champ Lionel Rose, Alan Rudkin and Chucho Castillo in two of their three fights. After reigning twice at 118, the Mexico City native became a two-time featherweight champion thanks to his title-winning efforts against Zensuke Utagawa for the vacant WBA strap in July 1974 and, after losing to Alexis Arguello four months later, a severely weight-weakened Bobby Chacon for the WBC belt in June 1975. While his title-fight record was spotty (8-5, 6 KOs), his desire to please his fans was everlasting, and one of his many rewards was induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1991.

*** Salvador Sanchez: One of** Olivares' IBHOF classmates was Sanchez, a native of Santiago Tianguistenco whose technical brilliance, cast-iron jaw and dedication to conditioning propelled him to immortality despite his tragically premature death at age 23 following a car crash. Sanchez died just 22 days after his pulsating 15th-round TKO over late-sub – and future Hall of Famer – Azumah Nelson at Madison Square Garden in July 1982. Sanchez vaulted onto the world stage with a stunningly dominant 13th-round TKO over long-reigning WBC featherweight champion Danny "Little Red" Lopez in February 1980, after which he maintained a super-charged pace – 10 fights in 29 months, including nine successful defenses. His was a reign that merged quantity and quality, and while he scored impressive wins over Ruben Castillo (UD 15), Lopez (TKO 14), Juan Laporte (UD 15) and Nelson (TKO 15), his signature victory was his eighth-round TKO over Wilfredo Gomez in August 1981. Gomez, the reigning WBC junior featherweight titleholder, was a 9-to-5 favorite thanks to a 32-0-1 (32 KOs) record that included a 14-0 (14 KOs) record in title fights. To the shock of most, it was Sanchez who was the power hitter as he dropped and nearly stopped Gomez in the opening round, swelled his face with stiletto-sharp counters and emphatically ended the match with another knockdown in the eighth. The victory resulted in Sanchez being named The Ring's co-Fighter of the Year with Sugar Ray Leonard, and, at just 22, he was elevated to legend status – a status that endures nearly four decades after his passing.

*** Carlos Zarate: The man** nicknamed "Cañas" merged Olivares' pulverizing power with Sanchez's long-armed generalship, and the result was one of history's most impressive stat lines: 63 knockouts in 66 victories and only four defeats, all coming against future Hall of Famers in Gomez, Lupe Pintor, Jeff Fenech and



Carlos Zarate



Miguel Canto

EL GRAN CAMPEON

Daniel Zaragoza. Blessed with above-average height for a bantamweight (5 feet 8 inches) and expansive reach (67 inches), Zarate had the luxury of assessing his opponents at a distance, then using his long arms to generate maximum leverage for his terrifying hooks and crosses. Zarate was involved in two of history's most explosive pairings; the first was his April 1977 over-the-weight match against WBA counterpart (and former stablemate) Alfonso Zamora that saw the 44-0 (43 KOs) Zarate crush his 29-0 (29 KOs) opponent in four scintillating rounds, while the second saw the still-WBC bantamweight king, now 52-0 (51 KOs), challenge WBC junior featherweight champion Gomez (21-0-1, 21 KOs) in October 1978, which resulted in the flu-ridden Zarate falling in five. By then, Zarate had crafted an exemplary legacy – eight defenses and eight knockout wins, including one over future champion Alberto Davila in February 1978. Following the Gomez loss, Zarate made his final title defense (his ninth) and added a non-title KO win before suffering a shocking upset split-decision loss to another former stablemate in Lupe Pintor, a verdict that earned almost universal condemnation during an era when long-term champions rarely lost their crowns on points. Zarate retired from the ring for six-and-a-half years before launching a comeback in February 1986, winning 12 straight (10 by KO) before ending his career with back-to-back title-fight losses to Fenech (TD 4) and Zaragoza (TKO 10). Zarate was a member of the IBHOF's Class of 1994 that included Michael Spinks, Joey Maxim and Jackie "Kid" Berg.

* **Miguel Canto:** As previously mentioned, Mexican fighters are known for their ability to overcome adversity, and in this regard Canto should serve as the ideal. Standing just a half-inch over five feet tall and possessing a miniscule 63-inch reach, one would have thought Canto was fated to become a face-first aggressor, but because he idolized the wizardry of 5-foot-5 featherweight legend Willie Pep, he incorporated many elements of the Connecticut native's game: balletic footwork, superb defensive reflexes, magnificent counterpunching and marvelous conditioning. Besides successfully overcoming his physical deficits, he also pushed through a difficult start to his career – a third-round TKO loss to Raul Hernandez in his pro debut, then a fourth-round TKO defeat to Pedro Carillo in his third bout. In fact, Canto's record was just 8-3-2 (2 KOs) through his first 13 fights, but starting with a 10-round points victory over Arturo Velazquez in November 1970, Canto found his groove and earned his first world title opportunity by going 25-0-1 (10 KOs), a string that included a loss-avenging second-round KO over Tarcisio Gomez in March 1973. Fighting for the WBC flyweight title vacated by Venice Borkhorsor (who chose to fight at 118), Canto traveled to Venezuela and lost a razor-thin majority decision to home country hero Betulio Gonzalez in August 1973, but instead of fading into obscurity, Canto strung together six straight victories to earn a second title shot. This time, he made good in full-circle fashion as he won a razor-thin majority decision in Sendai, Japan, over home country hero (and Gonzalez's successor) Shoji Oguma in January 1975. Over the next four years, Canto assembled a magnificent reign: a division record 14 defenses that included nine bouts outside of Mexico, two additional

ZARATE: PUNPAK MEDIA/ARCHIVES; CANTO: THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

victories over Gonzalez and Oguma, and a distinction that will never be equaled again: 11 consecutive 15-round decision victories. Canto's points loss in South Korea to the 9-0-1 Chan Hee Park in March 1979 was one of the year's most shocking results, and he ended his career much like he began it: three straight KO losses. What he achieved in-between those disappointing bookends earned him a spot in the IBHOF's Class of 1998 alongside Sammy Angott, Antonio Cervantes and Matthew Saad Muhammad.

This was the collection of greats Chavez had to surpass if he was to become the greatest boxer his nation ever produced. The 25-year-old Chavez was just entering his prime when he dethroned Rosario, and with 57 fights already under his belt, he had the luxuries of youth and experience. Over the next six years – from the Rosario fight until his disputed draw with Pernell Whitaker – Chavez crafted a resume so overwhelming that he was declared the best his nation had ever produced by the time he celebrated his 30th birthday in 1992. And when he finished his career in 2005, his accomplishments merited consideration for the highest rungs of the all-time pound-for-pound standings – regardless of nationality. Consider:

* **Chavez holds the all-time** record for most championship matches (37) as well as title-fight victories (31) – the latter figure being more than the 27 achieved by Olivares, Zarate and Sanchez combined.

* **He began his career with** 87 consecutive victories and was unbeaten in his first 90 before the string was broken by Frankie Randall in their first meeting in January 1994 – 13 years and 11 months after his pro debut. Olivares began his career 61-0-1 before losing his second match with Castillo while Zarate began his career 52-0 before losing to Gomez. Ricardo Lopez, who won his first 47 fights, ended his career 51-0-1 (38 KOs). The closest challenger to Chavez's victory string in the modern era was Pedro Carrasco's 83 between April 1964 and September 1970, but the vast majority of those bouts were staged in Europe against domestic-level foes and none involved widely recognized world titles.

* **He won his first 25 world title** fights – an all-time record he shares with Joe Louis and Cecilia Braekhus – and was 26-0-1 (19 KOs) entering the first Randall match.

* **His 21 KOs in world title fights** is second all-time behind Louis' 23.

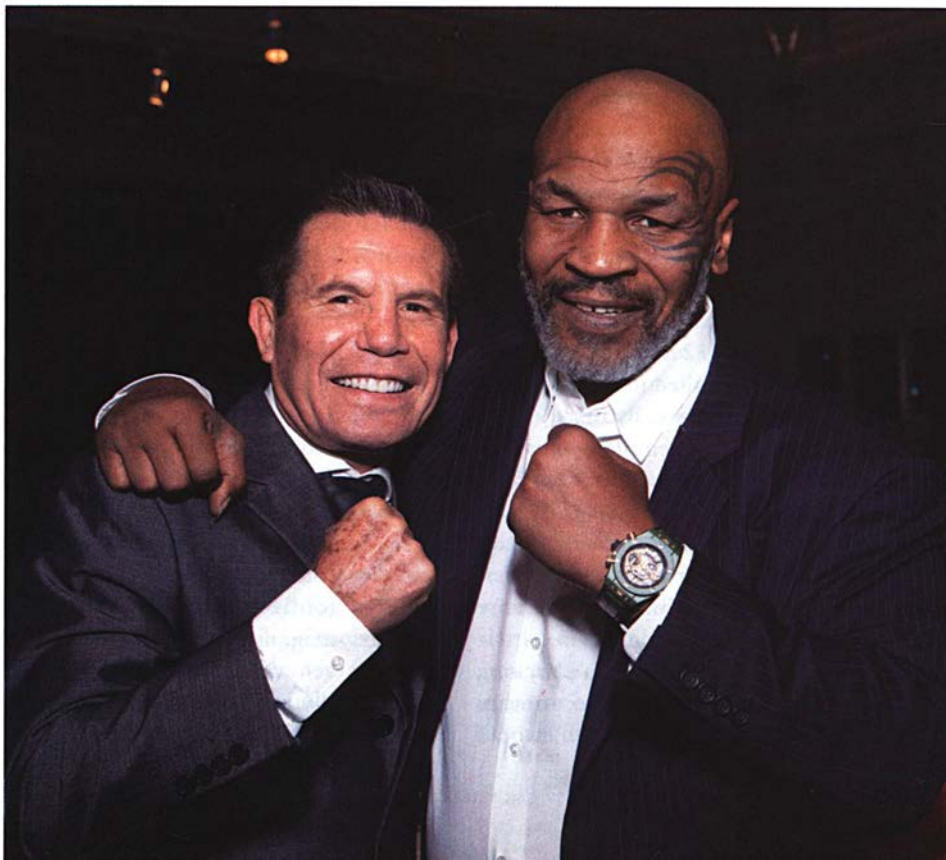
* **He produced historic reigns** at 130 (nine defenses, eight of which were staged away from his native Mexico in a three-plus year reign) and 140 (16 defenses in two tenures spanning seven years, of which 11 were road fights). While his time at 135 was brief, he managed to unify two sanctioning body titles and earn the vacant Ring championship against countryman Jose Luis Ramirez in October 1988 (TD 11), and his legendary come-from-behind 12th-round TKO over Meldrick Taylor in their first meeting in March 1990 enabled him to unify two major belts at 140.

* **He was the first Mexican to** win titles in three weight classes and was the 13th to do so regardless of nationality.

* **He fought 19 men who would** hold widely recognized world titles during their careers, and his record against them was 18-4-2 (10 KOs).

* **Chavez was The Ring's** No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter from June 1990 to December 1993 (43 consecutive months) and was in the top two from January 1990 (the first Ring issue to include pound-for-pound rankings) to April 1994 (51 consecutive months).

* **Chavez may well have been** the final fighter to produce credible talk of replacing Sugar Ray Robinson as the consensus No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter of all time. In the May



Mike Tyson adored Chavez's pressure-packed fighting style.

Canelo (right) came out to support a recent Chavez exhibition.

1993 issue of KO, Steve Farhood produced a speculative road map for Chavez – then 84-0 (69 KOs) – to achieve his stated goal of 100-0, one that had him fighting (and beating) Whitaker, Felix Trinidad and Kostya Tszyu. "Forget his early bouts and the non-title fights," he wrote. "By the time he reaches 100, he will be a four-division champion with a record of about 32-0 in world title fights. The greatest of all time? There will be an argument to be made."

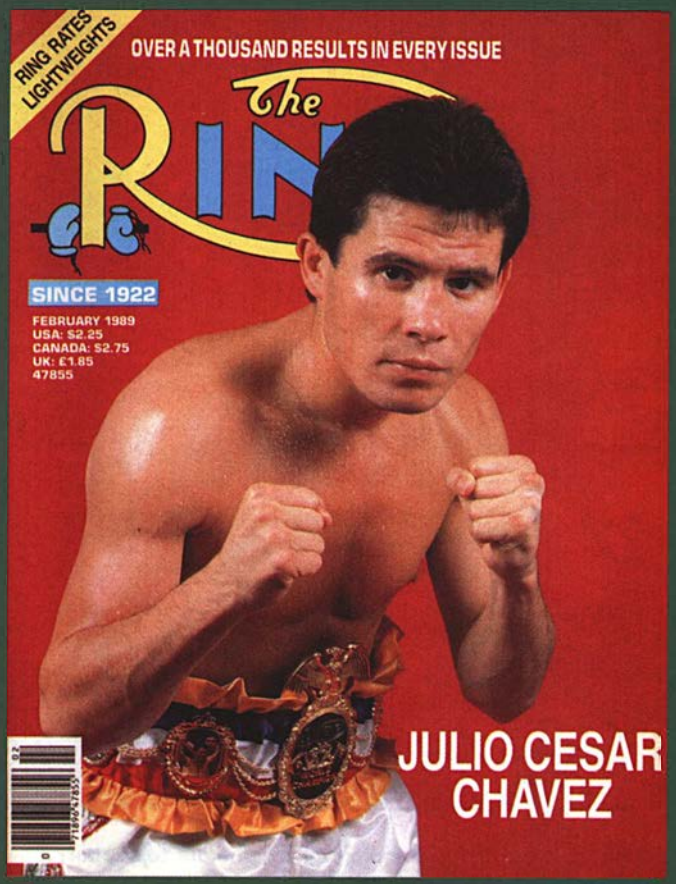
Of course, Chavez didn't make it to 100-0, and of course Chavez never fought Trinidad and he didn't defeat Whitaker (a D 12 that many count as a W 12 for Whitaker) or Tszyu (who stopped a ring-worn 38-year-old version of the Mexican idol in six rounds in July 2000). But The Ring's 1990 Fighter of the Year ended his nearly 26-year career with a 107-6-2 (85) record and the 2011 IBHOF inductee leaves behind a breathtaking legacy – one that includes the line "greatest Mexican fighter of all time."

Since Chavez's official retirement in September 2005, several countrymen made significant marks in boxing history – Marco Antonio Barrera, Juan Manuel Marquez and Erik Morales being the most prominent. While their challenges rightfully resulted in Hall of Fame plaques, their efforts fell short of toppling Chavez from the ultimate summit. But can Canelo Alvarez, who was recently seen embracing Chavez at "J.C. Superstar's" exhibition against Hector Camacho Jr. in July, be the one to replace him?

The answer: Probably not. The 31-year-old won't equal Chavez's 107 wins, 85 knockouts or 31 title-fight victories (Alvarez's mark is 15-1-1), but he is in the process of building a compelling resume. He has already surpassed Chavez by winning widely recognized titles in four weight classes, has faced 16 fighters who have won world titles compared to Chavez's 19 and has earned far more money in 58 fights than Chavez did in 115. But even Alvarez will concede that Chavez will never be replaced in the hearts of the Mexican people, for during his championship years he fought 14 non-title fights in Mexico just because he wanted his fans to see him perform live. He also took part in hundreds of exhibitions to raise countless millions for charity. Yes, "Canelo" may be the man of the moment, but in Mexico, Chavez is – and will forever be – "the man" as well as "the GOAT."

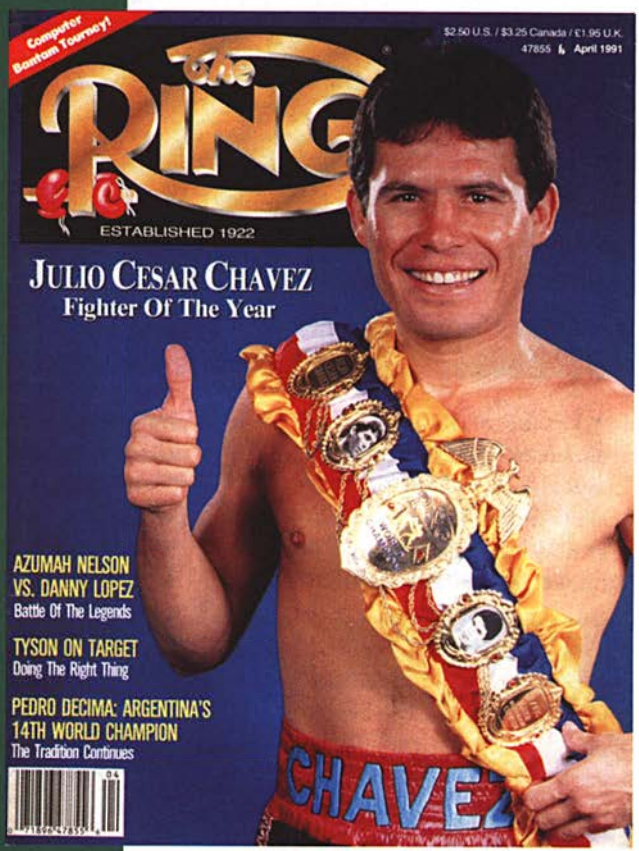
Lee Groves is a boxing writer and historian based in Friendly, West Virginia. He is a full member of the BWAA, from which he has won 20 writing awards, including two first-place awards, since 2006. He has been an elector for the International Boxing Hall of Fame since 2001 and is also a writer, researcher and punch-counter for CompuBox, Inc. He is the author of Tales from the Vault: A Celebration of 100 Boxing Closet Classics *(available on Amazon) and the co-author of* Muhammad Ali: By the Numbers *(also available on Amazon).*

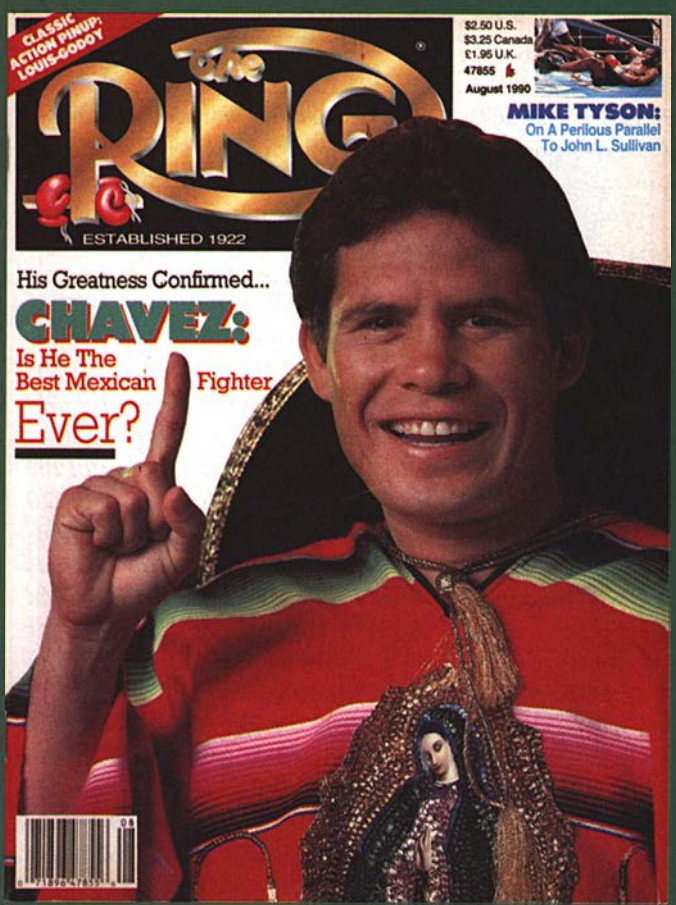
FROM THE ARCHIVES

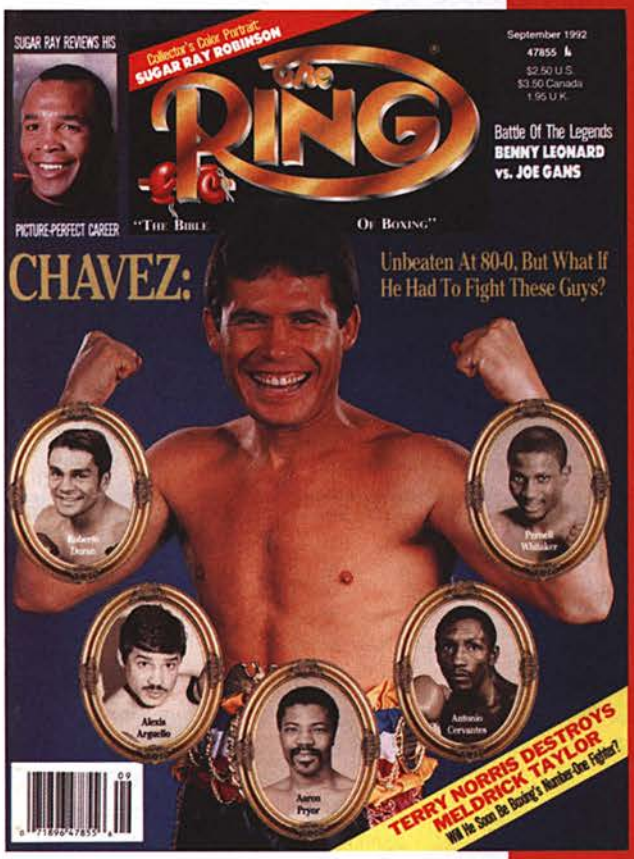


TRACKING THE LION:

Julio Cesar Chavez was our cover star for the first time in the August 1988 issue. By then, the marauding Mexican warrior was unbeaten in 60 fights and a two-weight world champion, viewed as an almost mythical figure in his home country. Throughout the remainder of the 1980s and well into the '90s, Chavez's reputation would reach even greater heights and he would remain a regular fixture within "The Bible of Boxing," either in the lead-up to eagerly anticipated superfights or to assess his standing as the greatest Mexican fighter of all time.



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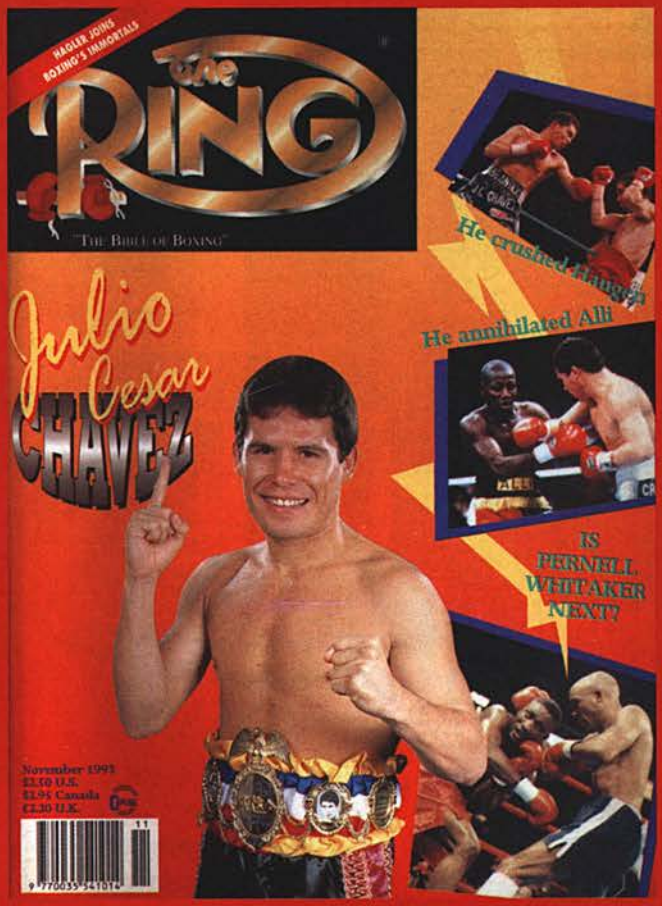
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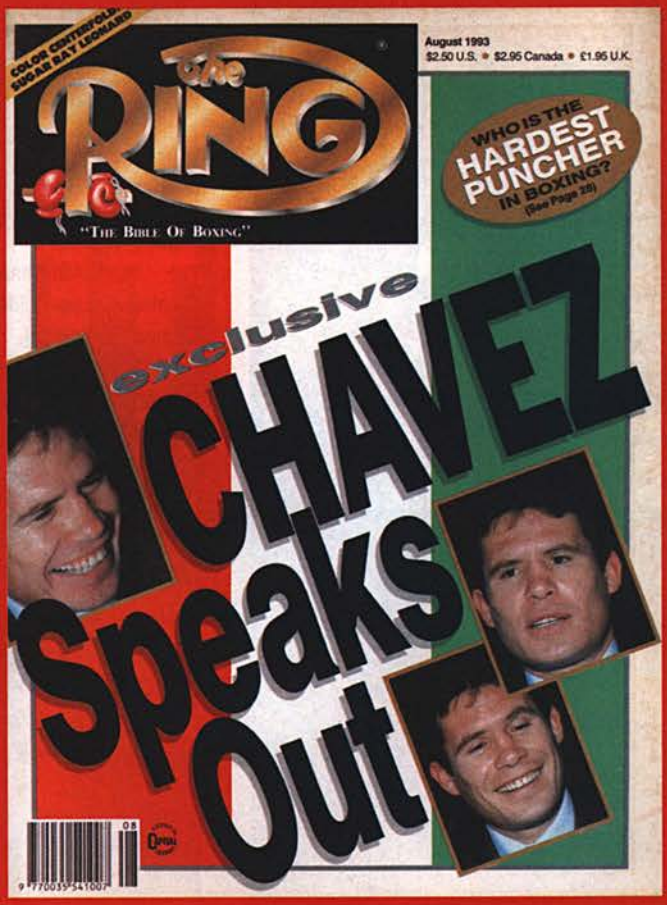
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(See Page 28)
exclusive
CHAVEZ Speaks Out

COMING UP

Errol Spence Jr. and Manny Pacquiao will compete for the vacant Ring Magazine welterweight championship on August 21.

AUGUST

AUG. 21 – Manny Pacquiao vs. Errol Spence Jr., welterweights (for vacant Ring and Spence's IBF/WBC titles), Las Vegas (Fox PPV).

AUG. 28 – David Benavidez vs. Jose Uzcategui, super middleweights, Phoenix, Arizona (Showtime).

AUG. 29 – Amanda Serrano vs. Yamileth Mercado, featherweights (for Serrano's WBC/WBO titles), Cleveland, Ohio (Showtime PPV). Also, Jake Paul vs. Tyron Woodley, cruiserweights.

SEPTEMBER

SEPT. 4 – Mauricio Lara vs. Josh Warrington, featherweights, Leeds, U.K. (DAZN); Also, Katie Taylor vs. Jennifer Han, lightweights (for Taylor's Ring/IBF/WBA/WBC/WBO titles).

SEPT. 10 – Oscar Valdez vs. Robson Conceicao, junior lightweights (for Valdez's WBC title), Tucson, Arizona (ESPN+). Also, Junto Nakatani vs. Angel Acosta, flyweights (for Nakatani's WBO title).

SEPT. 11 – Oscar De La Hoya vs. Vitor Belfort, light heavyweights, Los Angeles (Triller PPV).

SEPT. 11 – Stephen Fulton vs. Brandon Figueroa, junior featherweights (for Fulton's WBO and Figueroa's WBC titles), location TBA (Showtime).

SEPT. 18 – Canelo Alvarez vs. TBA, super middleweights (for Alvarez's Ring/WBA/WBC/WBO titles), Las Vegas.

SEPT. 25 – Anthony Joshua vs. Oleksandr Usyk, heavyweights (for Joshua's IBF/WBA/WBO titles), London. (DAZN).

OCTOBER

OCT. 9 – Tyson Fury vs. Deontay Wilder, heavyweights (for Fury's Ring/WBC titles), Las Vegas (Fox PPV).

OCT. 16 – Juan Francisco Estrada vs. Roman Gonzalez, junior bantamweights (for Estrada's Ring/WBA/WBC titles), U.S. (DAZN).

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